Current political and recent academic debate have centered on income or wealth inequality. Data suggests a rapidly growing divergence between those earners at the bottom and those at the top. This course seeks to place that current concern in conversation with a range of moments in nineteenth and twentieth century history when literature and economics converged on questions of economic inequality. In keeping with recent political economic scholarship by Thomas Piketty, we will be adopting a long historic view and a somewhat wide geographic scale as we explore how economic inequality is represented, measured, assessed and addressed.

Books:
Dickens, *Hard Times*
Wells, *The Time Machine*
Sinclair, *The Jungle*
Wright, *Native Son*
Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*
Adiga, *White Tiger*

Attendance:
> 2 absences, results in 1/3 grade reduction per missed class;
Please come and discuss if illness or life creates larger-scale difficulties.

Academic dishonesty: cheating and plagiarism will be treated in the appropriate manner as set forth in the students’ handbook. In your writing, always use your own words; otherwise, if quoting from the Web, books, or articles, always indicate that you are quoting and provide footnotes.

*Please note: several texts in this course contain vivid scenes of physical violence, including implied sexual violence. Also there is writing that includes strong language, what some might label blasphemous commentary, and other elements that might for some be disturbing. Please email me or speak to me in person if you might have concerns.

Schedule and Readings:

4/6

**Income Inequality: In the News**

Leonhardt, "The Rich Really Do Pay Lower Taxes than You"

Zucman, "Total Tax Rate Animation"

Scott and Chang, "Republican Tax Bill will exacerbate Income Inequality in America"

Weissman, "Maybe Wealth Inequality Isn't Surging After All"

Fisher and Bubola, "As Coronavirus Deepens Inequality, Inequality Worsens its Spread"

**Income Inequality: A Primer**

World Wealth and Income Database

Piketty, *Capital*, pp. 1-30; 103-123;150-163; 382-414

Atkinson, Economics of Income Inequality, "Conceptual Problems"

4/8

**Equality: the Ethical Debate**

Williams, “The Idea of Equality”

Nozick, “Equality, Envy, Exploitation, Etc."

Wright, “Thinking about Fairness and Inequality”

Welch, “In Defense of Inequality”

**Due: Abstract, 1-page**

4/13

Equality: some historical sources


Bentham, “Introduction to the *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. 1-3


**Due: Abstract, 1-page**

4/15


**Due: Abstract, 1-page**

4/20

Labor/ Capital

Dickens, *Hard Times*

Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England*, selections

**4/22**

Dickens, *Hard Times*

Nussbaum, “The Literary Imagination in Public Life”
4/27

Progress

Wells, *The Time Machine*

Jameson, “Progress versus Utopia: Or, Can We Imagine the Future?”

4/29

Competition

Sinclair, *The Jungle*

5/4

Sinclair, *The Jungle*

5/6

Wright, *Native Son*

Drake and Cayton, Introduction to *Black Metropolis*

5/11

Wright, *Native Son*

Collins and Wanamaker, “Up from Slavery? Intergenerational Mobility in the Shadow of Jim Crow”

5/13

Wright, *Native Son*

5/18

Consumption and Durable Goods

Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*

5/20

Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*
Tawney, “The Acquisitive Society” from *The Acquisitive Society*

5/25: Memorial Day--NO CLASS

5/27

**Human Capital/Human Capability**

*Pursuit of Happyness*, dir. Muccino

Layard, *Happiness*, selections


6/1

**Income Inequality**

Bong, *Parasite*

Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, ch 4