Richer & Poorer: Income Inequality

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*

Additional materials: (cm) = Course Materials section on Chalk
(ola) = Online library access
(o) = text available online, Google search

Income Inequality: A Primer

3/28
*Park Avenue*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6njWzomA_So (o)

3/30
*Piketty, Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 1-30, 150-163 (ola)
*Atkinson, Economics of Income Inequality*, “Conceptual Problems” (cm)

Equality: the Ethical Debate

4/4
*Williams*, “The Idea of Equality” (cm)
*Nozick*, “Equality, Envy, Exploitation, Etc.” (cm)
*Wright*, “Thinking about Fairness and Inequality” (cm)
*Welch*, “In Defense of Inequality” (ola); also http://pubs.aeaweb.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/aer.89.2.1

Equality: some historical sources

4/6
*Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, I.1 (“Of the Division of Labour”) and the conclusion to I.11 (“Conclusion of the Chapter”) (o)
*Bentham, “Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation”* (o)
http://www.econlib.org/library/Bentham/bnthPMLCover.html
*Malthus, An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Ch. 1 and 5 (o)

Labor/Capital

4/11
*Dickens, Hard Times*
Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England*, selections (cm)

4/13
Dickens, *Hard Times*
Nussbaum, “The Literary Imagination in Public Life” (cm)
Gallagher, *The Body Economic*, Ch. 3 (ola) (MA/PHD)

**Income/Occupation**

4/18

**Progress**

4/20
Wells, *The Time Machine*
Jameson, “Progress versus Utopia: Or, Can We Imagine the Future?” (cm)
Spencer, “Progress: Its Law and Cause” (cm) (optional)

**Competition**

4/25
Sinclair, *The Jungle*
Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*, chs 2-4, 11 (o)

4/27
Sinclair, *The Jungle*

**Leisure/Labor**

5/2
Fitzgerald, *Rich Boy*, (o)
Morrison, *Tales of Mean Streets*: "Introduction: the Street,” "Lizerunt" (o)
Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, chs 1-4 (o)

**Mobility**

5/4
Wright, *Native Son*
Drake and Cayton, *Introduction to Black Metropolis* (cm)

5/9
Wright, *Native Son*
Collins and Wanamaker, "Up from Slavery? Intergenerational Mobility in the Shadow of Jim Crow” (cm)

5/11
Wright, *Native Son*
Sharkey, "Neighborhoods and the Black/White-Mobility Gap", Pew Foundation (o)

**Consumption and Durable Goods**

5/16
*Landscape for a Good Woman*
Beveridge, *The Beveridge Report*, selected pages (cm)

5/18
*Landscape for a Good Woman*
Tawney, “The Acquisitive Society” from *The Acquisitive Society* (cm)
Happiness

5/23
Pursuit of Happiness, dir. Muccino
  Binkley, “Happiness and Neoliberal Governmentality” (cm)
  Layard, Happiness, selections tba (cm)

Human Capital/Human Capability

5/25
Adiga, White Tiger
  Becker, Human Capital, excerpt (cm)
  Brown, “Sacrificial Citizenship” (cm)

Globalization

5/30
Adiga, White Tiger
  Appadurai, “The Capacity to Aspire” (cm)

Assignments:
  1. In-Class Writing/Participation—15%
  2. Group Discussion and Commentary—20%
  3. Short Paper—25%
  4. Long Paper—40%

Elaine Hadley
ehadley@uchicago.edu
Walker 409
Office Hours Th: 2-4