

ECON 490 GENDER AND THE ECONOMY

Course Syllabus

Instructor Information

Instructor: PROF. ELIZABETH T. POWERS

Email: epowers@illinois.edu

Office Location: 211 DKH

Office Hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30 and Tuesdays 10-11 a.m. Office hours will be available via Zoom whether I am physically present in my office or not. Changes in office hours will be announced. Email me if you must meet at another time.

Communication: I communicate with students via University email, Canvas, or in person. I do not read or respond to electronic communications from non-University email addresses and platforms.

General Information

Credits: 3 Undergraduate; Can be taken for graduate credit with additional assignments.

Course Meets Requirements: Major electives

Semester: Fall 2026

Meeting Times & Location: Synchronous lectures via Zoom Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:30 A.M.-10:50 A.M. Lecture videos will be posted online also.

Exam Times & Location: Two midterm exams and the final will be synchronous online at the scheduled class time.

Exam Proctoring: This course uses ProctorU.

TA Information: Zhuo Chen, zhuo8@illinois.edu.

Missed assignments: I do not provide make-up opportunities. Exceptions are made when the absence is for an approved, documented reason, such as illness.

Exam Conflicts follow the Student Code Procedures:

Notify me at once at epowers@illinois.edu if you have an exam conflict or have missed an exam. Make-up exams will be offered in circumstances consistent with the student code.

Student Code Evening/Midterm/Hourly Exams: http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3_part2_3-202.html

Student Code Final Exams: http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3_part2_3-201.html

Course Description

Men's and women's experiences in the economy have changed dramatically over the past 100 years. More recently, differences in economic outcomes have narrowed. In this course, students apply economic theory and empirical techniques to increase their historical and contemporary understanding of gender in the economy. Topics include labor force participation, work-life balance, discrimination, differential impacts of technological change, and gendered beliefs and behaviors. Lectures are synchronous and online.

Prerequisites

ECON 102, ECON 202, ECON 203, ECON 302. *You may not take this class for credit if you have taken ECON 442. You may not take ECON 442 for credit once you have taken this class.*

Learning Outcomes

- Communication skills including recorded presentations.
- Critical thinking through careful reading.
- Analytical skills, problem-solving, and quantitative reasoning through the application of economic theory and empirical methods to real-world issues.
- Specialized knowledge of historical and stylized facts about women's labor market experiences.
- Specialized knowledge of important research literature in this area.
- Interdisciplinary knowledge and diverse issues imparted via research from closely related fields and subject matter.

Course Website

The course uses the Canvas platform.

Required Materials

There is no textbook. Assigned articles and supplemental materials are available via the class Canvas, online from [JSTOR](#), or through the [University Library](#). Complete references for the assigned articles are provided at the end of this document. I reserve the right to modify the readings or the reading schedule. If this occurs, the changes will be reflected on Canvas. Supplemental material will be provided as useful.

Graded Items

Grades are on a plus/minus scale, however the A+ grade will only be awarded in exceptional cases. I reserve the right to curve final grades. Rubrics are provided for exams and assignments. The graded elements are a group podcast, a video presentation, pre/post quizzes on the assigned readings, two in-class midterms, and a final.

Podcast (15%): Students will team up to produce a 15-minute podcast on a course-relevant topic. The podcast should include a clear explanation of the topic, presentation of relevant and rigorous information, and a lively discussion. The podcast can be audio-only or video.

Video Presentation (20%): Students will be asked to provide a brief oral overview of a reading assignment of their choice. There are two video presentations, each worth 10% of the grade.

Pre/Post Quizzes (25%): These are brief online quizzes about the 12 readings. The 'pre' quiz (15% of grade; 12.5 points each) asks basic questions about the assigned reading for the upcoming week. These quizzes are released on Canvas after class on Wednesday and are due before class the following Monday. There are two attempts allowed for the 'pre' exam and one attempt for the 'post'. The 'post' quiz (10% of grade; 8.33 points each) asks deeper questions about the reading. The 'post' quiz closes Sunday at 10 p.m. The lowest 2 pre-quiz scores and the lowest 2 post-quiz scores are dropped.

MIDTERM EXAMS (20%): There are two synchronous, online 50-minute midterms. Exams may consist of a multiple choice, true/false-explain, definitions, and short answer. Each exam has a live oral component via Zoom where you will be asked questions about one of the reading assignments. The oral component is worth 10% of the exam and there will be a window during the exam week to complete it. It is your responsibility to sign up for a time slot or you will receive a zero for the oral component.

FINAL EXAM (20%): A required final will be held in a 3-day window centered on the final time and date announced by the registrar. Exams may consist of a multiple choice, true/false-explain, definitions, and short answer. Each exam has a live oral component via Zoom where you will be asked questions about one of the reading assignments. The oral component is worth 10% of the exam and there will be a window during the exam week to complete it. It is your responsibility to sign up for a time slot or you will receive a zero for the oral component.

DUE DATES

ASSIGNMENT	DUE
Pre-quizzes	Throughout the semester; Pre-quizzes are open until the post-quiz for the unit is released. See Canvas calendar for exact dates.
Post-quizzes	This is a quiz that covers the past week's readings. See Canvas calendar for exact dates.
Midterm #1	September 28, 2026, 9:30-10:20, <i>synchronous online</i> . Oral section will be held by appointment via Zoom, dates/times TBA.
Video Presentation	10/14/26

Midterm #2	November 9, 2026, 9:30-10:20, <i>synchronous online</i> . Oral section will be held by appointment via Zoom, dates/times TBA.
Podcast	Must be uploaded by December 7, 2026.
Final	TBA

Academic Integrity

It is my responsibility as an instructor to uphold the academic integrity policy of the University, which can be found here: http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-401.html. According to the Student Code, "It is the responsibility of each student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions." Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the course. Every student is expected to review and abide by the Academic Integrity Policies. Ignorance is not an excuse for any academic dishonesty. Do not hesitate to ask the instructor(s) if you are ever in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other breach of academic integrity. **Read the full Student Code at the following URL: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>**

I use the FAIR system for suspected violations of academic integrity. The [direction to instructors](#) on Academic Integrity may be helpful. Penalties for violating the student code can be severe. FAIR findings of an integrity violation are reported on a students' transcript for a period of years, disadvantaging them in future situations where a transcript is required.

USE OF AIDS FOR QUIZZES AND EXAMS

All quizzes and tests must be taken without any reliance on external sources (the internet, Canvas website, readings, notes, AI, etc...). Classmates may not confer with each other during exams, or discuss the content of exams with a student who has not yet taken an exam. AI is not to be used for any exam or assignment. Each instance of AI use will constitute an academic integrity violation.

Attendance

(<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part5/1-501/>). This is an online class and you are not required, but are highly encouraged, to attend live lecture, and the two midterm exams are synchronous. However, if I find that it is not possible to communicate with you during the semester, I will report this to the Office of the Dean of Students (<http://odos.illinois.edu/>), which assists students in navigating the Student Code and course policies. Students who will not be able to engage with the class for an extended period of time should communicate with the Office of the Dean of Students.

Students with Disabilities

It is the student's responsibility to follow DRES procedures to obtain accommodation (disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids). *Students must notify me that they seek accommodation no later than the second week of instruction.* You must also contact Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible but no later than the first two weeks of instruction. To contact DRES, visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 333-4603 (V/TTY), or e-mail a message to disability@illinois.edu. The DRES Website is www.disability.illinois.edu/.

Exams must be taken at the scheduled time. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the exam with DRES and to insure that DRES notifies me at least two weeks ahead of the exam date. Students failing to abide by these parameters may not be allowed to take the exam with accommodation.

Religious Accommodations

The University's policy is to reasonably accommodate its students' religious beliefs, observances, and practices that conflict with a student's class attendance or participation in a scheduled examination or work requirement, consistent with state and federal law. Students must request a reasonable accommodation for their religious belief, observance, and practice in advance of the conflict to allow time for both consideration of the request and alternate procedures to be prepared. Not requesting an accommodation reasonably in advance of the conflict may result in a delay or denial of the accommodation.

A reasonable accommodation for a religious belief, observance, and practice is defined as a change that allows the student to participate in their religious belief, observance, and practice and which does not fundamentally alter the educational requirement or place an undue hardship on an instructor, department, or office.

Use [this form](#) to request religious accommodation.

Emergency Response Recommendations

Emergency response recommendations can be found at the following website:

<http://police.illinois.edu/emergency-preparedness/>. I encourage you to review this website and the campus building floor plans website within the first 10 days of class. <http://police.illinois.edu/emergency-preparedness/building-emergency-actionplans/>.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Any student who has suppressed their directory information pursuant to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) should self-identify to the instructor to ensure protection of the privacy of their attendance in this course. See <http://registrar.illinois.edu/ferpa> for more information on FERPA. Student information and records will not be released to anyone other than the student, unless the student has provided written approval or as required by law. More information may be found here: http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3_part6_3-602.html.

Sexual Misconduct Reporting Obligation

The University of Illinois is committed to combating sexual misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX and Disability Office. In turn, an individual with the Title IX and Disability Office will provide information about rights and options, including accommodations, support services, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options. A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors, confidential advisors, and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here:

<http://www.wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential>.

Other information about resources and reporting is available here: <http://wecare.illinois.edu/>.

Note that I am a mandated reporter.

Student Support

The Counseling Center is committed to providing a range of services intended to help students develop improved coping skills in order to address emotional, interpersonal, and academic concerns. Please visit their website to find valuable resources and services: <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>.

Counseling Center Information: 217-333-3704

Location: Room 206, Student Services Building 610 East John Street, Champaign, IL

Appointment: Scheduled for same day, recommend calling at 7:50 a.m.

McKinley Mental Health Information: 217-333-2705

Location: 3rd Floor McKinley Health Center 1109 South Lincoln, Urbana, IL

Hours: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday Appointment: Scheduled in advance.

Emergency Dean: The Emergency Dean may be reached at (217) 333-0050 and supports students who are experiencing an emergency situation after 5 pm, in which an immediate University response is needed and which cannot wait until the next business day. The Emergency Dean is not a substitute for trained emergency personnel such as 911, Police or Fire. If you are experiencing a life threatening emergency, call 911. Please review the Emergency Dean procedures: <http://odos.illinois.edu/emergency/>

Academic Assistance

Students are encouraged to seek out resources to help reach their full academic potential. It is better to reach out early in the semester, not only in times of trouble. My office hours are a time to discuss the course and get help and clarification.

Academic Dates and Deadlines

Students should make note of important academic dates for making changes to their courses.

<https://registrar.illinois.edu/academic-calendars>

Please check with your academic department regarding specific procedures and policies.

Drop class in Self-Service without "W": October 16, 2026

Submit credit/no credit request: October 16, 2026

Fall Break: November 21-29

Instruction ends: December 9, 2025

Final exams: December 11-17 (weekdays), 2025

Course Schedule

Class schedule changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. Readings indicated by ().

<i>PART I: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES</i>
Week 1: Welcome; Leisure-consumption model; Wage determination.
Week 2: Historical perspectives: White women (1). No class Monday (Labor Day).
Week 3: Historical perspectives White women (1); Black women (2).
Week 4: Black women (cont'd).
Week 5: Convex Compensation (3).
Week 6: MIDTERM EXAM #1
<i>PART II: THE GENDER GAP GOES TO COLLEGE</i>
Week 7: The gender gap begins in college (4) & (5) ¹
Week 8: The gender education divide reading (6)
<i>PART III: GENDER & LABOR MARKET TURMOIL</i>
Week 9: Where have male workers gone (7)?
Week 10: Skill-biased technological change (8).
Week 11: AI and the Labor Market (9)
WEEK 12: MIDTERM EXAM #2 (IN CLASS)
<i>PART IV: GENDERED BEHAVIOR</i>
Week 13: Job-seekers (10)
Week 14: Horrible bosses (11)
Week 15: More Horrible bosses (12); Exam Review
FINAL EXAM

¹Note that this week only, because there are two readings, there are two pre- and two post-quizzes.

ATTACHMENT A

READINGS

Read the assigned article prior to the corresponding class meeting. The list is subject to change at my discretion. Information on changes will be posted on Canvas.

- (1) Goldin, C. (2006a) “The quiet revolution that transformed women’s employment, education, and family,” *American Economic Review*, 96(2), pp. 1–21. doi: 10.1257/000282806777212350 (complementary download).
- (2) Alonso-Villar, O. and del Río, C. (2017) “The occupational segregation of African American women: Its evolution from 1940 to 2010,” *Feminist economics*, 23(1), pp. 108–134. doi: 10.1080/13545701.2016.1143959.
- (3) Goldin, C. (2014) “A grand gender convergence: Its last chapter,” *American Economic Review*, 104(4), pp. 1091–1119. doi: 10.1257/aer.104.4.1091., 108, pp. 1937–1972.
- (4) Wiswall, M., & Zafar, B., 2016. “Human Capital Investments and Expectations about Career and Family.” NBER Working Paper No. 22543. August. Available at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22543.pdf>.
- (5) Halim, D., Powers, E. T. and Thornton, R. (2022) “Gender differences in economics course-taking and majoring: Findings from an RCT,” *AEA papers and proceedings. American Economic Association*, 112, pp. 597–602. doi: 10.1257/pandp.20221120.
- (6) Buchmann, Claudia, Rachel E. Dwyer, and Man Yao. “The Deepening Gender Divide in Credentials, 2000–2020: Continuity, Change, and Implications.” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2025): 154–77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48803885>.
- (7) Bengali, Daley, & Duzhak. Pulled out or pushed out? Declining Male Labor Force Participation. FRBSF Working Paper 2025-07 <https://www.frbsf.org/wp-content/uploads/wp2025-07.pdf>
- (8) Hershbein (2017) “Do recessions accelerate routine-biased technological change? Evidence from vacancy postings,” *American Economic Review*, 108, pp. 1937–1972.
- (9) Hampole, Papanikolau, Schmidt, Seegmiller. “Artificial Intelligence and the Labor Market”. WP #33509. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w33509/w33509.pdf
- (10) Flory, J. A., Leibbrandt, A. and List, J. A. (2015) “Do competitive workplaces deter female workers? A large-scale natural field experiment on job entry decisions,” *The Review of Economic Studies*, 82(1), pp. 122–155. doi: 10.1093/restud/rdu030.
- (11) Abel, Martin. 2019. “Do workers discriminate against female bosses?” IZA DP Working paper #1261 (September).
- (12) Conzon, Vanessa M., 2023. “The Equality Policy Paradox: Gender Differences in How Managers Implement Gender Equality-Related Policies”. *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

ATTACHMENT B: GRADING RUBRICS**MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS**

Exams consist of multiple choice, short answer, and true-false-explain questions. Exams are online during our dedicated class meeting period. Students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and mode of exams. There is no credit for exams that are missed.

All exams have an oral component, worth 10% of the exam points. This consists of a brief conversation with me via Zoom in which students respond to a first question and a follow-up question about material covered by the exam. The questions will not be known in advance. Grading is based on demonstration of substantive knowledge of the material. It is the student's responsibility to sign up to take this component of the exam within a brief, multi-day window around the exam.

PODCAST

Students will team up to produce a 15-minute podcast on a course-relevant topic. The podcast should include a clear explanation of the topic, presentation of relevant and rigorous information, and a lively discussion. The podcast can be audio-only or video. Students will form their own groups. It may help to cultivate some variety in viewpoints to enrich discussion. Podcasts will be graded on content brought to bear on the topic and clarity of the presentation.