Economics 392: Women's Economic Roles  
Instructor: Randy Albelda  
Fall 2005  
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Course Description: This course presents an empirical and historical overview of the economic activity and roles of women in the United States. It also examines how economic theories explain these roles and looks at policies affecting women's economic status.

Prerequisites: Either Economics 101 or 102, or permission of the instructor.

Objectives: Women and men have historically faced very different economic opportunities and prospects. While these have changed dramatically over the last 30 years, women’s and men’s economic patterns and fortunes are still not the same, with women more likely than men to receive less income, more likely to face poverty, and more likely to be responsible for doing unpaid or low-paid care-taking work. Students should become familiarized with women’s and men’s economic activity in the United States, how these have developed, and how they have changed. Students should be able to analyze the role gender plays in important economic paradigms and in economic policies.

Readings: There are five required books. All are available in the UMass Bookstore (Administration Building Upper Level). You may also find these books for purchase on-line at various web sites selling books. I will try to place copies on reserve as well. The books are:


In addition there are some readings. I will make those available to you. Readings will be on electronic reserve through the library or posted on Prometheus.

Grades: Your final grade will be based on weekly classroom assignments, one paper, a mid-term exam and one additional substantive piece of work (either a book review and final exam or a research paper). Specifically, I will give weekly in-class writing assignments (worth 10% of your grade). These will be short (5-10 minute) writing exercises covering reading, classroom
discussions and/or current event topics relating to the course, usually but not always given at the beginning of one class every week. You will graded on the best 10 of 13 of them. Your first paper assignment is a short (5-7 page) paper depicting some aspect of women's economic status in the United States. It will be due on October 6 (worth 25% of grade). There will be a mid-term exam administered in class on November 8 (worth 30% of your grade). You have a choice for your last graded assignment. You may either write a 8-10 page research paper that looks at how a specific economic policy affects women's economic status. That paper is due on December 13 (worth 35% of your grade). [You will be required to turn in an outline and an annotated bibliography for that paper by November 22.] Alternatively you can write a review of a lengthy article, report, or a book on women’s economic policy AND take a final exam during finals week (worth 35% of your grade – the review is worth 15% while the exam is worth 20%). The review (a 4-6 page paper) is due December 6th and you are required to choose a book to review from a list I provide. You must discuss which book you intend to review with me by November 22. The final will be given during final’s week.

Attendance Requirements: You are expected to attend all classes. Reading materials and important material not covered in your readings are regularly discussed. If you do not attend on classes when there are in-class writing assignments you will receive no credit for that assignment and there will be no make-up assignments. You can (and should) let me know if you are not able to attend. If you do miss class you are responsible for any materials, instructions for the following week’s writing assignment, or changes to the outline.

Web-based materials: A syllabus, course outline, some readings, and most in-class handouts (including assignments) will be posted on this course PROMETHEUS website. You must register for the course and then sign in at http://boston.umassonline.net. The course ID is 7486 and the password is women.

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 - 2:15 and by appointment. I have voice mail, so you can always leave a message at 617- 287-6963. The quickest and easiest way to reach me is through email (randy.albelda@umb.edu). Do not hesitate to communicate with me.

Academic Integrity: You may work with other students when preparing for exams or in thinking about putting ideas together for your papers. However, all written work for a grade must be your own work. It cannot be copied from another student, a book, magazine, Internet, or any other written materials. If you do not abide by these standards it is academically dishonest, which can lead to a failing grade and possibly dismissal from the University. It is crucial you understand and abide by these rules and that is why I will be asking you to sign a form indicating that you understand these rules.

One serious and unfortunately common infraction of academic integrity is plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with the rules regarding plagiarism, consult the Economics Department’s statement on plagiarism at http://www.economics.umb.edu/plagiari.htm. Also, you may consult http://www.umb.edu/student_services/student_rights/code_conduct.html -- the University rules in the Code of Student Conduct at, under Part II., Academic Dishonesty. (Please note that the web address for the Code of Student Conduct contains the underscore mark between the words “student” and “services,” “student” and “rights,” and “code” and “conduct.”).
Course Schedule

September 6 through 29  Current Economic Roles of Men and Women
   We will look at women’s current economic status with particular attention to the sexual division of unpaid and paid labor, access to income, and earnings levels. We will also take a closer look at low-waged women’s work.

Assigned Reading:
   September 6-15
Spain and Bianchi, Balancing Act, chapters 1, 2, 4, 5-6

   http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook.htm


http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(LookupAllDocumentsByUNID)/1FF4AC64C1894EAC1256FA3005E7201?OpenDocument

September 20-22
Barker and Feiner, Liberating Economics chapters 3, 5, and 6

Salary.com, “Dream Job: Stay-At-Home Mom” May 2005 download from Prometheus or

Read ONE of the following three articles:
September 27-29
Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed (entire book).

Paper Due October 6

October 4-11  Women and Capitalist Production
The economic activities of all people in market-based all quite varied by age, race/ethnicity and gender. In this section we examine capitalist production and ways to think about women's and men's role in it historically.

Assigned Readings:
Amott and Matthaei, Race, Gender and Work, chapters 9 and 10.

Barker and Feiner, Liberating Economics chapter 2

Coontz, The Way We Never Were, chapter 1

NO CLASS OCTOBER 13

October 18 through 27 Women's Economic History in the United States (pre-WWII)
In this section we look at the specific economic activities of women in the United States. We will pay particular attention to the similarities and differences by race, ethnicity, age, and marital status.

Assigned Readings:
October 18-20:
Amott and Matthaei, Race, Gender and Work, chapter 3 or 4.


Joan Williams, Chapter 1 of Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do About It, Oxford University Press, 2000.

October 25-27:
Amott and Matthaei, Race, Gender and Work, chapter 5 or 6.

Coontz, The Way We Never Were, chapters, 3, 5, and 6.

November 1 through November 3 Women's Economic Roles in WWII-1970s
Women's economic roles in these decades have been characterized by those immortalized in the popular TV shows “Ozzie and Harriet” or “Leave It to Beaver.” In this section of the course we will explore the ways in which women's economic status did resemble these “traditional” roles.
Assigned Readings:
Amott and Matthaei, *Race, Gender and Work*, chapters 7 or 8.

Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, chapters 2 and 7.

**November 8: Mid-term Exam**

*November 10 through December 1: Explaining Women’s Contemporary Economic Status*

We will look at how does contemporary economics explain women’s economic roles and women’s economic progress. We will examine if and how gender makes a difference in economic outcomes.

Assigned Readings:
*November 10-17:*


Barker and Feiner, *Liberating Economics* chapter 4


*November 22- December 1:*


OPTIONAL READING

**Book/Report Review Due December 6**

**Research Paper Due December 13**

*December 6 through 13 Gender and Economic Policies*

With a firm grasp on women’s economic history and economic explanations for women’s economic status, we examine possible economic policies concerning women’s economic status.
**Assigned Readings:**
Barker and Feiner, *Liberating Economics* chapters 8

Read one of the following two articles:

OR

And read at least four of the following twelve articles:

**Aging and Social Security:**


**Single Mothers and Poverty**


**Minimum Wage**

**Paid Parental Leave**

**Early Education and Child Care**

**Comparable Worth**

**Women’s Equality Generally**