



1. General Information

Course Subject	ECON
Course Number	3262
Course Title	Inequality and Growth
Academic Years	2025-2026
Grading Method	Letter

2. Instructors

Professor ZHANG, Lichen
Office: Room 901 9/F K.K. Leung Building
Email: lichenz@hku.hk
Office: 3917 8129
Subclasses: 2A

4. Course Description

Course Description	Inequality and growth are always among the most important topics in economics and the most pressing issues of our times as well. Widening income and wealth gap between the rich and the poor is not only experienced by developed economies like the United States, but also by emerging economies like China. Particularly, Hong Kong is one of the most unequal cities in the world, which desperately calls for policies to tackle its worsening income and wealth gap. However, policies that reduce the inequality can sometimes hurt the efficiency, thus the economic growth. This requires extra painstakingness when policy makers are designing the policies. This course focuses on the relationship between inequality and growth, which consists of three major parts: data, model, and policy. We will start with empirical facts on inequality issues in economies over the world, in particular, U.S., China, and Hong Kong. Then we will revisit two-period Solow growth model so that we can build up the infinite-horizon Solow growth model and heterogeneous agent model to set up our framework to learn inequality and growth. Finally, we will use the model and empirical techniques we learn to provide policy guidance that can be used to deal with inequality issues and stimulate economic growth.
Prerequisites	ECON1280 Analysis of economic data or IIMT1640 Probability and statistics for business or STAT1601 Elementary statistical methods or STAT1602 Business statistics or STAT1603 Introductory statistics or STAT2601 Probability and statistics I or STAT2901 Probability & statistics: Foundations of Actuarial Science or equivalent; and ECON2220 Intermediate macroeconomics
Free Elective	Yes

5. Course Objectives

1. To provide a thorough introduction to empirical facts on inequality and growth

5. Course Objectives
2. To apply statistic methods to measure inequality and growth using micro and macro data
3. To build up theoretical framework that can be used to learn the relationship between inequality and growth
4. To use theoretical framework to provide policy guidance on inequality and growth

6. Faculty Learning Goals
Goal 1: Acquisition and internalization of knowledge of the programme discipline
Goal 2: Application and integration of knowledge
Goal 3: Inculcating professionalism
Goal 4: Developing global outlook
Goal 5: Mastering communication skills
Goal 6: Cultivating leadership

7. Course Learning Outcomes						
Course Teaching and Learning Activities	Aligned Faculty Learning Goals					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
CLO1. Understand empirical facts as well as issues and challenges on inequality and growth	✓			✓		
CLO2. Use micro and macro data to measure inequality and growth	✓	✓	✓	✓		
CLO3. Obtain useful information from data and figures on inequality and growth		✓	✓		✓	
CLO4. Use Solow growth model and heterogeneous agent model to study the relationship between inequality and growth	✓	✓	✓	✓		
CLO5. Use theoretical models to provide policy guidance on dealing with inequality issues and stimulate economic growth		✓	✓	✓		✓

8. Course Teaching and Learning Activities		
Course Teaching and Learning Activities #	Expected Study Hours	Study Load (% of study)
T&L1. Lectures	36	30
T&L2. Tutorials	12	10
T&L3. Self-study	72	60
	Total: 120	Total: 100

9. Assessment Methods			
Assessment Methods	Description	Weight %	Aligned Course Learning Outcomes
A1. Projects and		40%	1,2,3,4,5

9. Assessment Methods

assignments			
A2. Presentations	5-minute in-class data & figure presentation (students need to collect data and produce figures by themselves)	10%	1,2,3
A3. Midterm		20%	1,2,3,4,5
A4. Final Exam		30%	1,2,3,4,5

10. Course Grade Descriptors

A+,A,A-	Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis.
B+,B,B-	Strong evidence of the ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, and synthesis.
C+,C,C-	Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis.
D+,D	Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.
F	Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.

11. Course Content and Tentative Teaching Schedule

Topic/ Session	Content
	Week 1: A brief introduction to inequality and growth: why they matter? Macro measurement and national accounts (BEA-NIPA)
	Week 2: Micro data (CPS, PSID, CEX etc.) and inequality measurements Empirical facts on income inequality in the U.S.
	Week 3: Cross-country comparisons on income inequality: developed countries Income inequality issues in China Income inequality issues in HK
	Week 4: Wealth inequality Entrepreneurs and wealth inequality
	Week 5: Inequality and business cycles Inequality during 2007-2009 financial crisis and recessions
	Week 6: In-class midterm
	Week 7: Stylized facts on growth 2-period Solow growth model revisit infinite horizon Solow growth model
	Week 8: Bellman equation and basic dynamic programming Simple heterogeneous agent model

11. Course Content and Tentative Teaching Schedule

	Week 9: Inequality and growth: why inequality matters for growth
	Week 10: Inequality over life-cycle
	Week 11: Consumption inequality Inequality and welfare: how to measure welfare Policy instruments to deal with inequality and stimulate growth: part I
	Week 12: Policy instruments to deal with inequality and stimulate growth: part II Some further topics on inequality and growth

12. Required/Recommended Readings & Online Materials

Textbook	The course will not have a specified textbook and will be based on the lectures notes that I write, together with a list of papers.
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13. Means / Processes for Student feedback on Course

✓	Conducting mid-term survey in addition to SETL around the end of the semester
	Online response via Moodle site
	Others

14. Course Policy

1. Lecture PDF files will be posted on Moodle before each class. Please download and bring them to class.
2. Bring paper and be prepared to take notes in each lecture.
3. Tutorials:
 - 3.1 Tutorials start in the first week of class.
 - 3.2 The tutorials serve as a complementary to the lecture. The TA will not give you another mini-lecture to summarize previous week's lecture.
4. Assignments: All assignments must be typed. This is a course policy that applies to all subclasses in all academic years. You can use either MS Word or Latex/Lyx.
5. Elaboration and some examples/handouts will be done only in class. You will miss a lot of material if you skip classes.
6. STATA: You will be taught to use STATA to deal with data in this course
7. Midterm examination policies: No supplementary midterm examination will be given. If you have a legitimate reason for missing the midterm, its weight will be added to the final exam. The only legitimate reason is sickness. If you cannot attend the midterm exam, you must inform the instructor or TA in person or via email (preferred) before the exam starts. In the case of sickness, you must provide a medical certificate to verify that you have sought medical treatment prior to the exam and that you are unfit to take the exam.
8. Final examination policies: if you have a legitimate reason for unable to attend the final exam on the scheduled time, you need to apply for a make-up exam by yourself via: <http://www.exam.hku.hk>
8. Do check your email regularly for course announcements from the instructor. But do not abuse the convenience of emails.
 - a. Do not ask about things you are supposed to know, such as those appear in Moodle or emails from the instructor/TA.
 - b. Email is only for very quick questions that instructor and TA can answer within 1-2 sentences. For questions such as "I don't understand how to do Question #1 or I don't understand the answer key to that question, could you help me?", instructor and TA will not be able to answer them via email. For long questions, please come to the office hour of the instructor or TA, or talk to instructor after each week's lecture.
9. Classroom conduct: Be a considerate and mature person. The instructor and TA have the discretion to impose penalty in case of classroom misconduct.
 1. Do not videotape or audio record the lectures.
 2. Please observe the following good practice:
 - Come to class and return from the break on time.
 - In case you are late, minimize disruption to the class by sitting at the back.
 - If you have to leave the class early, please inform the instructor beforehand and sit close to the door.
 - Stay attentive and do not chat with your classmates.
 - Use of mobile phone for any purposes is strictly prohibited. Remember to turn it off.
10. Academic Conduct

The University Regulations on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced! Please check the University Statement on plagiarism on the web: <http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism/>

14. Course Policy

Academic dishonesty is behavior in which a deliberately fraudulent misrepresentation is employed in an attempt to gain undeserved intellectual credit, either for oneself or for another. It includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following types of cases:

a. Plagiarism - The representation of someone else's ideas as if they are one's own. Where the arguments, data, designs, etc., of someone else are being used in a paper, report, oral presentation, or similar academic project, this fact must be made explicitly clear by citing the appropriate references. The references must fully indicate the extent to which any parts of the project are not one's own work. Paraphrasing of someone else's ideas is still using someone else's ideas, and must be acknowledged.

b. Unauthorized Collaboration on Out-of-Class Projects - The representation of work as solely one's own when in fact it is the result of a joint effort. Where a candidate for a degree or other award uses the work of another person or persons without due acknowledgement:

(1) The relevant Board of Examiners may impose a penalty in relation to the seriousness of the offence;

(2) The relevant Board of Examiners may report the candidate to the Senate, where there is prima facie evidence of an intention to deceive and where sanctions beyond those in (1) might be invoked.

Plagiarism will automatically result in at least a zero score in the plagiarized assignment or examination. Serious cases will be referred to the University's Disciplinary Committee.