



Course Outline

TU241 Reducing Social Inequality Semester 2/2025 (January 5 - May 3, 2026)

Lecture Time: Saturday, 09.00-12.00 hours

Lecture Venue:

Teaching Materials Platform: [Google Classroom / MS Team / Facebook Group / etc. Please specify with an actual URL or access code.]

Instructor:

Name: Ajarn. Min Ye Paing Hein

Office Hours:

Email:

Phone:

Number of Credit: 3 Credits (3-0-6)

Prerequisite:

Course Description

This course introduces students to the study of social inequality from normative, empirical, and policy perspectives. Students will explore foundational debates on what inequality is and why it matters, methods of measuring inequality, its multidimensional manifestations (gender, race/ethnicity, spatial disparities, labor markets, wealth), and policy instruments used to address it. The course also examines the consequences of inequality globally and in Thailand, including social, political, economic, and welfare dimensions.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Define and critically assess normative theories of inequality and justice.
2. Use key metrics (Gini, Palma, quantiles, poverty measures, wealth indices) to measure inequality.
3. Analyze different dimensions of inequality: gender, racial/ethnic, spatial, educational, wage, and wealth.
4. Understand and evaluate policy instruments: fiscal (taxation), redistributive transfers (conditional/unconditional cash transfers), labor/welfare programs, universal income schemes.
5. Explain the social, political, and economic consequences of inequality.
6. Apply course concepts to the study of inequality in Thailand, including regional development gaps and social policies.

Learning Management and Evaluation

CLO	Learning Outcome Description	Assessment Method
CLO1	Define and critically assess normative theories of inequality and justice.	Midterm Exam, Final Exam, Participation
CLO2	Use key metrics (Gini, Palma, quantiles, poverty measures, wealth indices) to measure inequality.	In-Class Quizzes, Data Exercises, Final Exam
CLO3	Analyze different dimensions of inequality: gender, racial/ethnic, spatial, educational, wage, and wealth.	Midterm Exam, Group Presentation, Participation

CLO4	Understand and evaluate policy instruments: fiscal (taxation), redistributive transfers, labor/welfare programs, universal income schemes.	Midterm Exam, Final Exam, Group Presentation
CLO5	Explain the social, political, and economic consequences of inequality globally and in Thailand.	Midterm Exam, Final Exam, Group Presentation, Participation
CLO6	Apply course concepts to study inequality in Thailand, including regional development gaps and social policies.	

Learning Assessment Plan

Assessment Method	Assessment Period / Week	Weight (%)	Linked CLOs
In-Class Quizzes	Weeks 2–14 (Periodic, covering all content)	20	CLO2
Data Exercises	Weeks 3–12 (Periodic, applied exercises)	10	CLO2, CLO6
Midterm Exam	Week 6	25	CLO1, CLO3, CLO4, CLO5
Group Presentation	Week 13	20	CLO3, CLO4, CLO5, CLO6
Final Exam	Week 15	15	CLO1, CLO2, CLO4, CLO5
Participation	Weeks 1–15	20	CLO1, CLO3, CLO5, CLO6

Course Structure (15 Weeks)

Weeks 1–12: Global / Conceptual Foundations

Week 1: What is Inequality? Normative Foundations

- Concepts: inequality, justice frameworks (Rawls, Sen, Dworkin), luck vs choice, moral/social/economic relevance
- **Global Examples:** Philosophical debates across Europe, US, India
- **Readings:**
 - Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality Reexamined*. Oxford University Press
 - Rawls, J. (2009). *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press (selections)

Week 2: Inequality of What? Income, Wealth, Capability, Opportunity

- Concepts: Outcome vs opportunity, intergenerational mobility, multidimensional inequality
- **Global Examples:** US Opportunity Atlas; Nordic intergenerational mobility
- **Readings:**
 - Roemer, J. E., & Trannoy, A. (2015). “Equality of Opportunity.” In *Handbook of Income Distribution* (Vol. 2, pp. 217–300). Elsevier
 - US Opportunity Atlas: <https://www.opportunityatlas.org>

Week 3: How Do We Measure Inequality?

- Concepts: Gini coefficient, Lorenz curve, top income shares, Palma ratio, Theil index, poverty measurement
- **Activity:** Compute inequality measures using LIS or publicly available datasets
- **Global Examples:** Piketty & Saez (France/US); Milanovic (Global)
- **Readings:**
 - Piketty, T., & Saez, E. (2007). *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(1), 3–24
 - Jenkins, S. P. (2022). Getting the measure of inequality. IZA Discussion Paper No. 14996
 - Milanovic, B. (2016). *Global inequality: A new approach for the age of globalization*. Harvard University Press

Week 4: Inequality Across Dimensions: Gender and Race/Ethnicity

- Topics: Gender wage gaps, care economy, unpaid labor, structural discrimination, intersectionality
- **Global Examples:** US gender pay gap, South Africa racial inequality, Scandinavian policies
- **Readings:**

- World Bank. *Women, Business and the Law*
- Charles, M., & Grusky, D. B. (2018). Egalitarianism and gender inequality. In *The Inequality Reader*, pp. 389–404. Routledge
- Darity Jr, W., & Nembhard, J. G. (2000). *American Economic Review*, 90(2), 308–311
- Jomo, K. S. (2003). *American Economic Review*, 93, 338–342

Week 5: Spatial Inequality

- Topics: Regional disparities, urban-rural divides, housing, infrastructure
- **Global Examples:** Brazil urban vs rural; China coastal vs interior; India state disparities
- **Readings:**
 - Diamond, R., & Gaubert, C. (2022). *Annual Review of Economics*, 14(1), 795–819
 - Galster, G., & Sharkey, P. (2017). Spatial foundations of inequality
 - Deutscher, N. (2020). *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 12(2), 220–249

Week 6: Education and Intergenerational Mobility

- Topics: Segregation, meritocracy, affirmative action, education inequality, talent vs effort vs genetics
- **Global Examples:** US K–12 segregation, Indian caste-based reservations
- **Readings:**
 - Jerrim, J., & Macmillan, L. (2015). *Social Forces*, 94(2), 505–533
 - Sengupta, S., & Guchhait, S. K. (2021). *Journal of Developing Societies*, 37(1), 57–82
 - Sandel, M. J. (2021). *Harvard Gazette*
 - Chetty, R., et al. (2020). *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 135(3), 1567–1630

Week 7: Inequality in Labor Markets: Wage Inequality

- Topics: Skill-biased technological change, minimum wages, informal sector
- **Global Examples:** US low-skill service jobs; Mexico informal sector; Germany vocational system
- **Readings:**
 - Autor, D. H., & Dorn, D. (2013). *American Economic Review*, 103(5), 1553–1597
 - Nüesch, S. (2007). *The Economics of Superstars and Celebrities*. Wiesbaden: Gabler
 - Koenig, F. (2023). *American Economic Review: Insights*, 5(2), 207–223

Week 8: Wealth Inequality

- Topics: Wealth concentration, inheritance, land inequality
- **Global Examples:** US top 1% wealth, France historical estates, Latin America land concentration
- **Readings:**
 - Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the 21st Century*. Harvard University Press
 - Robeyns, I. (2019). *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 20(3), 251–266
 - Mijs, J. B. (2019). *Socio-Economic Review*, mwy051

Week 9: Fiscal Instruments to Address Inequality

- Topics: Progressive taxation, inheritance/capital gains/property taxes, VAT, regressive vs neutral taxes
- **Global Examples:** OECD countries' progressive taxes; US estate tax; Nordic systems
- **Readings:**
 - Scheve, K., & Stasavage, D. (2016). *Taxing the Rich: A History of Fiscal Fairness in the United States and Europe*. Princeton University Press
 - Bonica, A., et al. (2013). *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(3), 103–123

Week 10: Redistributive Instruments I: Cash Transfers

- Topics: Conditional/unconditional cash transfers, targeting vs universality
- **Global Examples:** Mexico's Progresa/Oportunidades; Brazil Bolsa Familia; India Jan Dhan/CCT pilots
- **Readings:**
 - Fiszbein, A., & Schady, N. R. (2009). *Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty*. World Bank
 - Parker, S. W., & Todd, P. E. (2017). *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55(3), 866–915

Week 11: Redistributive Instruments II: Labor and Welfare Programs

- Topics: Universal basic income (UBI), employment guarantee programs, social insurance (health, pensions, unemployment)
- **Global Examples:** India MGNREGA; Finland UBI pilot; South Africa social pensions
- **Readings:**
 - Banerjee, A., Niehaus, P., & Suri, T. (2019). *Annual Review of Economics*, 11(1), 959–983
 - Imbert, C., & Papp, J. (2015). *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 7(2), 233–263

Week 12: Challenges in Implementation of Inequality Solutions

- Topics: Political, administrative, and social barriers; corruption, evasion, globalized economies
 - **Global Examples:** Tax evasion in OECD, program leakages in Latin America
 - **Readings:**
 - Kuziemko, I., et al. (2015). *American Economic Review*, 105(4), 1478–1508
 - Stantcheva, S. (2021). In *Combating Inequality: Rethinking Government's Role*, Chapter 28. MIT Press
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Weeks 14–15: Thailand-Focused Lectures

Week 14: Inequality in Thailand I: Structure and Trends

- Topics: Historical roots, education, land, market structure, political economy, patronage networks, regional disparities
- **Readings:**
 - Jenmana, T., & Gethin, A. (2019). *Extreme Inequality, Democratisation and Class Struggles in Thailand*. World Inequality Lab
 - Arayavechkit, T., et al. (World Bank). *Bridging the Gap - Inequality and Jobs in Thailand* [link](#)
 - Chiengkul, P. (2019). *Third World Quarterly*, 40(9), 1689–1707
 - Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2015). *Unequal Thailand: Aspects of income, wealth and power*. NUS Press

Week 15: Inequality in Thailand II: Policy Responses and Consequences

- Topics: Fiscal and redistributive policies: UHC, State Welfare Card, minimum employment programs, land and inheritance taxes; social consequences: education, health, political outcomes
- **Readings:**
 - Mercado Jr, R., et al. (2024). *Journal of Asian Economics*, 94, 101775
 - Wagstaff, A., & Manachotphong, W. (2012). *The Health Effects of Universal Health Care: Evidence from Thailand*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 6119