



Course Outline

EE406 Contemporary Economic Issues

Semester 2/2025 (January 5 - May 2, 2026)

Lecture Time: Wednesday, 09.00-12.00 hours

Lecture Venue: Room 202

Teaching Materials Platform: Google Classroom

Use this link to join: <https://classroom.google.com/c/ODI0MDUxNDU0NDg2?cjc=mtumtw2l>

Or Class Code: mtumtw2l

Instructor:

Name: Asst. Prof. Dr. Thorn Pitidol

Office Hours: by appointment

Email: thorn@econ.tu.ac.th

Phone:

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

Prerequisite: EE211 and EE212

Course Description:

This course is a general introduction to the subject matter and methods of economics, through the investigation of specific contemporary economic issues such as economic growth, inequality, poverty, and environmental deterioration. The focus also is on how economists address these issues.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to provide students with a general knowledge about “contemporary” economic issues such as that of inequality, poverty, labour market institutions, social welfare, and environmental deterioration.

To do so, the course will focus on two connected themes: trends of inequality and policies for inequality reduction. The study of inequality examines the current nature of the problems, and the future trends that will create profound impact. Two trends will be investigated to look at their impact on the changes in inequality. These trends include (1) technology change, (2) climate change. The course also looks at the connection between middle income trap and inequality, in order to examine how inequality is intertwined with the inability to achieve economic growth.

After the study of inequality, the course will focus on policies for reducing inequalities. The policies that will be covered include, for example, education policies, health policies, social protection policies, taxation and other aspects of public finance, and the political economy of inequality reduction. The aim of the course's study of these policies is to explore pathways that can address the challenges in reducing inequality.

The course is naturally quite a departure from orthodox economics – and offer a more interdisciplinary approach to economic analyses. By doing so, we aim to

1. Equip students with tools to understand economic issues using definitions, principles, measurement, and observation;
2. Make students acquainted with economic data such as poverty rate, inequality indicators, labor market statistics, and budgetary statistics, and other indicators concerning public health and education;
3. Train students on academic writing and presentation through class assignments and guide the development of research methods.

Evaluation:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Midterm examination | 30% |
| • Final examination | 40% |
| • Group assignment and presentations | 20% |
| • In class activities and participation | 10% |

Mid-Term Examination: **Wednesday, February 25, 2026 Time: 9.00-11.00**

Final Examination **Wednesday, May 13, 2026 Time: 13.30-16.30**

Text and Readings:

- Class slides and references
- United Nations (2020). World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

- McKinsey Global Institute (2017). A Future that Works: Automation, Employment, and Productivity. McKinsey&Company
- World Bank (2024). World Development Report 2024: The Middle Income Trap. World Bank Group
- International Labour Organization (2022). World Social Protection Report 2020-2022. Social Protection at Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future.
- Pitidol Thorn (2014). Communitarianism and the Expansion of Freedom, Book for V-Reform. Thai Health Foundaion. (in Thai: ธร ปีติดล (2557) แนวคิดเรื่องชุมชนนิยมกับการสร้างเสริมเสรีภาพ. ชุดหนังสือสำรวจองค์ความรู้เพื่อการปฏิรูปประเทศไทย มูลนิธิสาธารณสุขแห่งชาติ)
- Pitidol Thorn (2021). The History of Thailand’s Welfare System: A Comparative Study of Factors and Paths of Welfare State Development. Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University (in Thai: ธร ปีติดล (2564) ประวัติศาสตร์ระบบสวัสดิการในประเทศไทย: การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบปัจจัยและเส้นทางพัฒนาการของระบบสวัสดิการไทยกับสากล คณะเศรษฐศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์)
- Pitidol, Thorn (2024). *Building Thailand’s Welfare System*. FES-Thailand Publication. (in Thai: ธร ปีติดล. การผลักดันระบบสวัสดิการในประเทศไทย. มูลนิธิฟรีดริชเอแบร์ท ประเทศไทย)
- Pitidol, Thorn (2024). *Ideologies and Narratives in Thailand’s Welfare System*. FES-Thailand Publication. (in Thai: ธร ปีติดล. แนวคิดและอุดมการณ์ในระบบสวัสดิการไทย. มูลนิธิฟรีดริชเอแบร์ท ประเทศไทย)

Lecture notes

- EE406 Contemporary Economic Issues Lecture Notes, January 2024, Thorn Pitidol, Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University.

*Additional mandatory and suggested reading lists under each chapter will be provided via google classroom. Please regularly check for the readings to be assigned for each topic in Google Classroom.

Class Policies:

The classes will consist of (1) lecture (2) class activities, and (3) group works preparation. Attendance is strongly encouraged. It is the responsibility of the students to obtain any information announced in the class. Ignorance of such information due to absence of class is not a valid defense.

Make-up examinations are not permitted unless; (i) in case of illness – you need to provide the faculty with the doctor’s medical note; (ii) family emergency – case-by-case basis.

Students are encouraged to work together and exchange ideas outside of class. However, plagiarism and cheating will be treated seriously with disciplinary actions. Thammasat University and our faculty take academic integrity extremely seriously, and there will be academic consequences if you are found possibly guilty of misconducts. Please refer to the university guidelines if you have any questions.

Any changes to the course outline (if any) will be announced in the class or uploaded on Google Classroom.

In-class Activities and participation score:

For each topic, there will be in-class activities to assist students reviewing key contents, and checking their understanding. The activities consist of, for example, discussions, debates, a quick exchanges, and short presentations.

These activities will be recorded and submitted to the lecturer, with the students' participation checked to be their participation score.

Students are expected to do the preparation readings before joining the activities. The content of the activities will be related to group works and final exams.

Group Works:

There will be two group works, one to be submit before mid-term, and another to be submit before final exam.

Students will be divided into groups. The total number of groups shall not exceed 7 groups. Each group work comprises of a report and a presentation. 4-5 topics will be provided for selection.

To aid the preparation, after the topic is selected, there will be 2 time slots for students to meet with the lecturer to help them go through their preparation of the report and the presentation.

In the final week before mid-term and final exam, student will need to submit their report and do the presentation. Students are expected to take their presentation in a similar way to their participation in the case-competition.

Topics

Theme 1: Trends in inequality

1. Inequality: overview (Week 1-3)

- Economic inequality: global perspectives
 - Income inequality across countries

- Trend within countries
- Inequality of opportunity
- The price of inequality
- Inequality: the case of Thailand
 - Important trends
 - Vulnerable groups
- **Week3 - Inequality: the case of ASEAN (guest lecture)**

2. Technology and inequality (Week 4-5)

- The technological revolution: winners and losers
 - Technology, employment, and inequality
 - The case of platform economy
 - The case of automation
 - Technological divide and opportunity for inclusion
- The case of Thailand
 - Ensuring fair competition
 - Quality work

3. Climate change and inequality (Week 6-7)

- Channels and determinants
- Unequal exposure and impacts across countries
- Unequal exposure and impacts within countries
- Distribution effects of climate action

[week 8- mid-term exam]

Theme 2 Policies for inequality reduction

4. Middle income trap and inequality (Week 9-10)

- Middle income trap: meaning and situation
- Why middle-income trap happened? The connection between middle income trap and inequality
- Successful transition away from middle-income trap: what are needed

5. Social protection (Week 11-14)

- From Covid 19 pandemic to the need to focus on social protection
 - Covid-19, vulnerability, and inequality
 - Covid-19 and the policy gaps
- Social protection

- Meanings and rationale
- Global challenges
- Current gaps
- Financing social protection
 - Types of social protection policies and financing options
 - Different combinations of policies and implications
- Diagnosing social protection gaps in Thailand
 - Context and challenges
 - Current landscape
 - Diagnosing gaps

7. Education and health (Week 15&16)

- Education, health, and inequality
- Understanding educational and health inequality
- The case of Thailand

Class Schedule

Week	Topics (Tentative)	
1	Introduction	Inequality: global perspective
2	Inequality: case of Thailand	In-class activities and group work preparation
3	Inequality: the case of ASEAN (Guest Lecture)	
4	Technology and inequality	In-class activities
5	Technology and inequality	In-class activities
6	Climate change and inequality	In-class activities and group work preparation
7	Climate change and inequality	Group work 1 presentation
8	Mid-term exam week	
9	Middle-income trap	In-class activities

10	Middle-income trap	In-class activities
11	Social protection: introduction	In-class activities and group work preparation
12	Social protection and inequality reduction	In-class activities
13	Diagnosing social protection gaps in Thailand	In-class activities
14	Education and health	In-class activities
15	Education and health	In-class activities and group work preparation
16	Group work 2 presentation	Closing of the course

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Morality and Ethics EE406

Applicability	Expected Learning Outcomes	Evaluation Method
●	1. Students demonstrate integrity.	In-class activities
●	2. Students prioritize social and public benefits over personal ones.	In-class activities
●	3. Students are punctual and comply with the code of conduct of the institution and society at large.	In-class activities
○	4. Students are responsible and accountable to society, the nation, and the subject of economics.	
○	5. Students realize the cultural and environmental value of a sustainable society.	

2. Knowledge

Applicability	Expected Learning Outcomes	
●	1. Students know and understand modern economics principles and	Group works and exams

	theories, and are up to date with new developments.	
●	2. Students know and understand Thai and global economic structure and the importance of major international economic events.	Group works and exams
○	3. Students know and understand the instruments of economic analysis.	Group works and exams
●	4. Students know and understand applied fields in economics, including monetary, public, international, business, natural resource, and environmental, industrial, agricultural, cooperative, political, developmental, and entrepreneurial economics as well as agribusiness.	Group works and exams
●	5. Students are informed about related fields including sociology, business administration, education, law policy, and science.	Group works and exams

3. Intellectual Development

Applicability	Expected Learning Outcomes	
●	1. Students have developed individual critical thinking.	Group works and exams
●	2. Students are sufficiently trained in research skills.	Group works and exams
●	3. Students demonstrate an ability to analyze and synthesize data, as well as appropriately integrate economics concepts to understand the causes of current economic problems in Thailand. Based on analysis and synthesis, students demonstrate an ability to propose policy guidelines to resolve problems.	Group works and exams

4. Interpersonal Skills and Responsibilities

Applicability	Expected Learning Outcomes	
●	1. Students are responsible for assigned tasks and work in groups effectively.	Group works and exams
●	2. Students have problem-solving skills.	Group works and exams
○	3. Students show leadership skills and team spirit.	Group works and in-class activities
●	4. Students are always improving themselves.	Group works and exams

○	5. Students have good interpersonal skills, adapt, and work under different conditions.	Group works and in-class activities
---	---	-------------------------------------

5. Quantitative Analysis, communication, and information technology

Applicability	Expected Learning Outcomes	
○	1. Students select and apply appropriate statistical and mathematical methods for data processing, interpretation, conclusions, and recommendations to resolve problems.	Exams
○	2. Students communicate effectively and select appropriate presentation methods.	Group works and in-class activities
○	3. Students use information and communication technologies appropriately to gather data as well as process, interpret, and present results.	Group works and in-class activities

Remark: ● Primary expected outcome ○ Secondary expected

Learning Management and Evaluation

CLO	Learning Management	Evaluation
CLO1.1 Describe and explain key contemporary economic issues including inequality, poverty, and climate change.	Lectures; guided discussions; weekly readings from global and Thai sources.	Midterm and final exams; class participation.
CLO1.2 Analyze the impacts of technological and environmental changes on economic inequality.	Case studies and debates; in-class exercises on automation, climate impact, platform economy.	In-class debates; final exam essays.
CLO2.1 Evaluate inequality reduction policies such as education, health, and social protection using interdisciplinary reasoning.	Lectures and student-led discussions on policy effectiveness; group research and peer feedback.	Group assignments; presentations; final exam policy analysis.
CLO3.1 Collaborate effectively on group assignments and presentations.	Group project assignments; instructor consultations; peer support sessions.	Group project submission and teamwork quality.
CLO3.2 Communicate ideas clearly in academic discussions and group presentations.	Weekly in-class activities; report rehearsals and structured presentations.	Group presentations and class communication tasks.

CLO4.1 Demonstrate academic integrity and responsibility in in-class activities.	Participation tracking; in-class engagement and reflection exercises.	Participation score based on classroom presence and collaboration.
--	---	--

Learning Assessment Plan

CLO	Methods of Learning Assessment	Assessment Week	Proportion of Assessment
CLO1.1 Describe and explain key contemporary economic issues including inequality, poverty, and climate change.	Midterm and final exams; class discussion performance	Weeks 8, 16	30%
CLO1.2 Analyze the impacts of technological and environmental changes on economic inequality.	In-class discussions; final exam analytical essays	Weeks 4–6, 16	10%
CLO2.1 Evaluate inequality reduction policies such as education, health, and social protection using interdisciplinary reasoning.	Group assignments and policy evaluation in final exam	Weeks 9–15	20%
CLO3.1 Collaborate effectively on group assignments and presentations.	Group project submission; peer review and feedback	Weeks 7, 16	10%
CLO3.2 Communicate ideas clearly in academic discussions and group presentations.	Group presentations and instructor evaluations	Weeks 7, 16	10%
CLO4.1 Demonstrate academic integrity and responsibility in in-class activities.	Participation logs; in-class activity tracking and feedback	Throughout semester	20%