



LSE-PKU Summer School 2018

LPS-EC208 | Economics of Gender: An Asian and Comparative Perspective

INSTRUCTOR

Dr Judith Shapiro is the Undergraduate Tutor in the Department of Economics at LSE. Her research interests include the economics of post-transition and transition (with a particular focus on Russia), and the economics of health and population. She has previously held positions as Chief of the Transition Economics Section of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and professor at the New Economic School in Moscow.

The Graduate Teaching Assistant for this course is **Jennifer Kohler**, LSE PhD student in Economic History, researching “Women’s Empowement in Africa.”

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This course will offer students a good understanding of progress towards gender equality across the world today, with a strong focus on China in a comparative and global perspective.

It will also provide participants with the necessary in-depth economic understanding and empirical evidence to answer questions such as: Why has the position of women changed so dramatically in the last 50 years, and in history? Why does it differ from country to country to this day? Why is women’s pay and work, and position in the household, still far from equal? Is this injurious to women’s welfare only, or to all? What policies and environments can lead to greater gender equality?

This course aims to provide students with:

- A good understanding of progress towards gender equality across the world today, with a strong focus on China in a comparative and global perspective.

- An understanding of how economists and others in international organisations seek to measure gender equality and the status of women in the paid labour force, in unpaid work in the home and other key dimensions of life.
- A knowledge of the wealth of evidence on gender available online and how to use it, with particular emphasis on data and information on China, which is much more accessible than many expect.
- An introduction to “thinking like an economist” about the economics of gender: a working knowledge of valuable key concepts; debates within economics about what economics of gender means; the increasingly greater use of psychology in behavioural economics; increasing emphasis on empirical evidence, without abandoning valuable theoretical insights.
- A knowledge of how economists seek to disentangle discrimination against women from other forces making for gender inequality.
- An introduction to debates over “nature versus nurture” in explaining gender differences, which includes new studies on the role of institutions and psychology, including experimental evidence.
- An introduction to important debates and proposals on what policies are needed for the next stage in progress towards full gender equality, in China, Asia and the world.
- An, optional, additional objective, is to introduce interested students to intriguing research questions and gender information on China and the world, to aid in future undergraduate research work, including dissertations. The instructor will be available for extra work with those who seek to build on this course to go further.

PREREQUISITES

There is no formal prerequisite in Economics for the lectures and core readings. Students should not be uncomfortable with numbers, data graphs and statistics, but the course will be accessible to all, with more quantitative and challenging material strictly optional and not in the lectures or core readings.

ASSESSMENT

Midterm Essay: 50%, final Exam: 50%

Students will write a mid-term essay, which may be in the style of a section of an international organization report, comparing China and two other countries on a key chosen aspect. This is due on Monday of the second week. I will offer feedback and advice if desired before the due date.

The final Friday a 2-hour exam will set 4 short questions and 2 longer essay questions. The plan for classes is for a mixture of debate topics and clarification of concepts.

Questions will be very welcome through the lectures for clarification and discussion, and the lecturer will ask the class for contributions throughout. Although there will be PowerPoints for organisational structure and wonderful illustrations (even humour), the focus will be on interactive and active learning and free exchange. This is both to develop skills and to encourage students to continue working in this remarkable and expanding area of study in economics.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND READINGS

Background reading possible:

An excellent evidence-rich overview of key topics in the economics of gender, as applied to China, [is to be found here](#). This offers Professor Xiao-Yuan Dong's presentation at an international expert meeting, 2012: "Gender, Labor, and Inclusive Growth".

We will use a coursepack of individual readings, not a textbook. Lecture handouts contained in the coursepack will provide intuitive and non-technical explanation of key concepts needed in economics and statistics (econometrics), with examples drawn as far as possible from China, so that those who know these concepts will deepen their economics knowledge. However, for students with no previous study of economics the following textbook is excellent background, but in no sense required, except for brief selections which will be in the coursepack:

- Joyce P. Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender*, 3rd ed, Blackwell Publishing (2007).

For students with some previous study of economics, this textbook is also excellent, particularly on bargaining within the household, which will explain, with a non-technical beginners' introduction to Game Theory.

- Mukesh Eswaran, *Why Gender Matters in Economics*, Princeton University Press (2014)

Core readings are in large measure drawn therefore from the reports of international organisations, and other writing by economists, but written for non-specialists. It is worth re-iterating that students should be comfortable with some statistics and graphs, but that the instructor will provide an intuitive and accessible understanding of key economics concepts and statistical methods used in the readings, much of it in a format for further use.

More advanced students will be able to use the data, theories and information also.

Enrolment by students with more economics and quantitative background is welcome, and additional reading will be provided for them in a supplementary coursepack.

As we will make good use of the World Bank's *Towards Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific*, (2012), from the first day, and it is [available without charge online here](#), you may wish to read or at least skim the first 2 chapters in advance.

Course Overview

- Day 1: An overview of: How do economists see gender equality in the world today
Gender Equality achievements and challenges in China How Chinese Women Economists see gender equality today
- Day 2: Why has economic development been accompanied by progress towards gender equality, and how has this varied from country to country: China in a comparative focus.
- Day 3: How have China's economic reforms from 1978 affected the status of women?
- Day 4: How is gender equality measured; why does this matter? Where do different countries stand today and a decade ago? What historical progress has there been?
- Day 5: How economists approach the question of unpaid work in the home. What we know about China and other countries in this important dimension. What policy solutions are possible in this sphere?
- Day 6: Women in the paid labour force: Trends over time and space in occupational segregation ("women's work") and gender pay gaps.
- Day 7: Why gender pay gaps are so stubbornly still there and what can be done. How economists work out how much is due to discrimination
- Day 8: Debates over the origin and persistence of women's disadvantage: nature versus nurture. What field experiments have revealed.
- Day 9: The one-child policy and the sex ratio in China in comparison. Where does son preference come from? What will be its impact?
- Day 10: Conclusion. Towards full gender equality? But how and how fast? Where are we going and how can we get there?