



LUND
UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management

EEH034F, The History of Economic Inequality, 7.5 credits

Den ekonomiska ojämlikhetens historia, 7,5 högskolepoäng

Third Cycle / Doktorandnivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by The Board of the Department of Economic History on 2020-12-01 to be valid from 2020-12-01, spring semester 2021.

General Information

This is an optional course at the PhD programme.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of studies: Economic history

Learning outcomes

On an overarching level, the student will acquire knowledge on economic and social inequality from a historical perspective. The student will acquire a solid base of knowledge to stand on for further discussions on the development and history of inequality, and will have insights in the methods, theories and sources applied in research on historical inequality.

More specifically, to pass the assessments students should be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- account for the evolution of income and wealth inequality in key economies of Europe since the 1300s
- describe and discuss the main types of sources for historical economic inequality
- analyze the debates and contradictions in the research literature on the history of economic inequality

Competence and skills

- analyze the development of inequality and its causes from a variety of theoretical and analytical perspectives
- conduct independent evaluations of empirical research and judge its use of sources and methodology

Judgement and approach

- critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various empirical approaches to historical inequality
- perform analyses of economic and social inequality in a historical setting, and point to lacunas of our knowledge, and roads forward for research on these topics

Course content

This course discusses the history of economic and social inequality, focusing on the Western world since the Middle Ages. The aim is to bring students up to speed with the research frontier in research on historical inequality. While some attention is paid to classic studies, the emphasis is on newer research.

The core issues are these. One, what is defined as inequality and what is measured? Concepts of income and wealth are introduced and discussed, and we discuss alternative empirical approaches to the overall theme of “inequality”. The disciplinary divides and boundaries between economics, economic history, history, sociology and other relevant disciplines are discussed. We discuss the connections between economic, social, and political inequality in history. We also go through the main types of sources used in historical studies of inequality: tax data, probate inventories and wills, and social tables. Second, we go through recent empirical research on economic inequality through history. We discuss strengths and limitations of the literature and what we know a lot about and what is omitted from the literature.

We discuss where the research field is going and what kind of research is needed going forward. The course gives students a deeper understanding of economic inequality, its history and its development.

Course design

The course consists of reading of key literature, and a number of mandatory group meetings where students are expected to actively participate in discussion. For the meetings, the students will also write shorter written assignments in relation to the readings. During the first part of the course, we read important studies in the history of economic inequality and discuss the literature in depth at group meetings. The course ends with the writing of an essay on a topic in historical inequality and living standards. The essay submitted is part of the examination and is presented and discussed in a seminar.

Assessment

The grading is based on individual performance in the form of written summaries, essays, presentations and other required activities. The quality of the course essay which is discussed at the final meeting is an especially important consideration for the grading. Equally great value is placed on the oral element in the form of active participation in group discussions during meetings and seminars.

The University views plagiarism very seriously, and will take disciplinary actions against students for any kind of attempted malpractice in examinations and assessments. The penalty that may be imposed for this, and other unfair practice in examinations or assessments, includes suspension from the University.

Grades

Marking scale: Fail or Pass.

Entry requirements

PhD students applying for this course should have at least 60 credit points in either economic history, business administration, economic and social geography, economics, history, sociology or the equivalent knowledge.

Further information

This course cannot be combined with EKHT35 Economic History: Advanced Topics in Economic Development - Explaining Growth and Inequality