

Econ 1204  
Spring 2022  
Dr. Yang

## Economics of Race (CRN: 14360)

This course will investigate the racial inequality puzzle by using basic economic analysis to explore the causes and consequences of racial differences in economic outcomes. Both economic theories and empirical data on racial inequality will be studied in order to shed light on why people from different racial and ethnic groups have different labor market outcomes. Along the way, students will examine related historical and institutional contexts of racial issues. We will also consider the impact of current and proposed public policies on employment choices and outcomes across different racial and ethnic groups.

**You should know all the information given in this syllabus. If you have a question during the semester, please try to find the answer here BEFORE asking me.**

### **IMPORTANT: MASK POLICY:**

Virginia Tech is committed to providing students with in-person curricular and co-curricular experiences during the fall semester. To that end, VT has required that both instructors and students, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear face coverings in all classrooms and laboratories when classes begin August 23. VT considers the upholding of the university's guidance for health and safety protocols under the conditions of COVID-19, including the updated [masking mandate for indoor spaces](#) to be essential to maintaining a positive learning environment.

As a member of VT faculty, I am obligated to maintain a positive learning environment in the classroom. Section [Section 9.9: Classroom Conduct](#) of the Faculty Handbook states "Maintaining a good learning environment in the classroom is an important part of a faculty member's responsibility as a teacher. Disruptive classroom conduct on the part of some students may be distracting, annoying, or intimidating to other students, and should not be tolerated by the teacher."

As such, **wearing a mask to cover both your nose and mouth will be required in the classroom for the entire duration of the class** until otherwise indicated by VT policy which follows the VDH health guidelines. Those without masks will be asked to leave the classroom until they can secure a mask upon which time they may return to the classroom. Any material missed due to failure to wear a mask will be the responsibility of the student.

**Note:** Face shields alone do not offer the same level of protection as masks and

therefore are not approved for use in instructional spaces.

Finally, as indicated by the mask-wearing requirement, no food or any kind of drink is allowed during the class. This can be stated in the syllabus. Please also see <https://www.registrar.vt.edu/faculty-staff/Room-Reservations.html>

“10. Food and Drink No food or drink is allowed in any of the academic classrooms or auditoriums.”

### Format of the Classes

Our class is a face-to-face one, which means that we don't offer a simultaneous Zoom access to the lectures. All the lecture slides will be posted on Canvas “Modules” on a weekly basis.

**Note: I do NOT take attendance.**

The following are roughly the steps you are expected to follow on a weekly basis:

1. Browse the assigned materials
2. Read the accompanying lecture slides posted on Canvas after each lecture.

### Time and Dates for Exams

The midterm is 50 minute long, and the final is two hour long. The exams will take place in our usual classroom unless announced otherwise. The schedule of these exams are as follows:

**Midterm (50 minutes): Wednesday 03/03, in class**

**Final (120 minutes): Tuesday 05/10, 3:25pm-5:25pm**

### Weekly Office Hours

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/83750981320?pwd=bTRabWRsTlZGU113djNlVmorQmg5QT09>

Meeting ID: 837 5098 1320

Passcode: 142089

I will also hold extra office hours prior to the exams

**Time: 5:30pm-6:45pm on Thursdays**

### Email Policy

Email is the best way to reach me. My email is [zyang74@vt.edu](mailto:zyang74@vt.edu). Please don't send messages

over Canvas because sometimes they will get lost, and I won't be able to get back to you in a timely manner

**When you email me, please include “Econ 1204” in the subject line. I’m teaching multiple courses this semester, so it’s very important for you to include the course number in email communications.**

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with test-taking accommodations from SSD should contact me and give me the appropriate paperwork by **Wednesday Feb. 09** in order to make arrangements for midterm and/or final. Once your exam is scheduled, I won't be able to reschedule it to another time/date due to logistic reasons. So, please use your accommodations if you have them –once you take an exam, there is no remedy for a poor grade.

### **Textbook**

The following book is the main text. We may also periodically assign journal articles.

#### **Recommended Text:**

O’Flaherty, Brendan. The Economics of Race in the United States. Harvard University Press, 2015, 496 pages.

We will cover several chapters from this book. The university library also keeps an electronic version of the book, which is downloadable in pdf format. Please contact the library directly if you have any issues with downloading the e-book.

We will also use journal articles, which are will generally available via the web.

### **Prerequisites**

This is a 1000 level undergraduate course that helps students fulfill their pathway requirement in Social Sciences/Economics. The content of this course is self-contained. That is, no previous exposure to economics is required, and economic tools will be introduced as needed throughout the course.

### **Requirements**

**Reading:** Please read the assigned book chapters or articles before each class.

For the first part of the course, which is about basic microeconomics, readings are in the folder “Readings\_Microecon” in the Canvas “Files”. These are summary slides provided by the publisher

**Exams:** There will be one midterm exam and one final exam. The midterm counts for 35% of your course grade. The midterm is scheduled for **Wednesday 03/02**.

The final exam is scheduled to be on **Tuesday, May 10, 2022, 3:25-5:25pm**. The final exam is **non-cumulative** and covers the materials after the midterm. The final counts for 50% of your course grade

There are also two practice problem sets, one before the midterm and the other before the final. These practice problems are intended to help you prepare for the exams. Your grade on these practice problems are assigned based **entirely on completion**. These two practice problems count for a total of 15% of your course grade

I expect that each student will stay informed about further information or changes in due dates and assignments. Changes will be announced in class and posted on the "class announcements" section of Canvas. The exam dates are fixed and will not change; you can expect that there will be changes and updates to reading assignments.

### **Academic Conduct**

You may obtain tutoring for this course, and you may work on homework together. **The purchase or sale of class materials is prohibited. You are also prohibited from sharing class materials (including slides, lecture videos, homework assignments, etc) with anybody not registered for this course.** All students are expected to comply with the honor code. You are further charged with reporting any suspected honor code violations by other students in the course.

### **THE NEW HONOR SYSTEM STATEMENT:**

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

Academic integrity expectations are the same for online classes as they are for in person classes. We strongly encourage all instructors to discuss the use of technology, and specifically discuss areas we know are problematic temptations for students such as Chegg, CourseHero, and GroupMe to discourage students from using them. When the semester starts is an appropriate

time in addition to providing a kind reminder before exams and assignments about expectations related to these sites. Please make your students aware that we are able to effectively investigate these incidents. If you have any questions about these sites or discussing them with your students, please do not hesitate to call our office. All university policies and procedures apply in any Virginia Tech academic environment, and all students are expected to follow them.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

**Honor Code Pledge for Assignments:** The Virginia Tech honor code pledge for assignments is as follows:

*“I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”*

The pledge is to be written out on all graded assignments at the university and signed by the student. The honor pledge represents both an expression of the student’s support of the honor code and a commitment to uphold the academic standards at Virginia Tech.

In addition:

1. All assignments submitted shall be considered “graded work” and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Honor Code. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.
2. The Academic Integrity expectations for Hokies are the same in an online class as they are in an in-person class. Hokies are expected to meet the academic integrity standards at Virginia Tech at all times.
3. Commission of any of the following acts shall constitute academic misconduct. This listing is not, however, exclusive of other acts that may reasonably be said to constitute academic misconduct. Clarification is provided for each definition with some examples of prohibited behaviors in the Undergraduate Honor Code Manual located at <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>
  - **CHEATING:** Cheating includes the intentional use of unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise, or attempts thereof.
  - **PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism includes the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one's own original work, or attempts thereof.
  - **FALSIFICATION:** Falsification includes the statement of any untruth, either verbally or in writing, with respect to any element of one's academic work, or attempts thereof.
  - **FABRICATION:** Fabrication includes making up data and results, and recording or reporting them, or submitting fabricated documents, or attempts thereof.
  - **MULTIPLE SUBMISSION:** Multiple submission involves the submission for credit – without authorization from the instructor receiving the work – of substantial portions of any work (including oral reports) previously submitted for credit at any academic institution of attempts thereof.

- **COMPLICITY:** Complicity includes intentionally helping another to engage in an act of academic misconduct, or attempts thereof.
- **VIOLATION OF UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, DEPARTMENTAL, PROGRAM, COURSE, OR FACULTY RULES:** The violation of any University, College, Departmental, Program, Course, or Faculty Rules relating to academic matters that may lead to an unfair academic advantage by the student violating the rule(s).

*“If you have questions or are unclear about what constitutes academic misconduct on an assignment, please speak with me. I take the honor code very seriously in the course. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an F\* sanction as your final course grade. The F represents failure in the course. The “\*” is intended to identify a student who has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Virginia Tech. A student who receives a sanction of F\* as their final course grade shall have it documented on their transcript with the notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION.” You would be required to complete an education program administered by the Honor System in order to have the “\*” and notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION” removed from your transcript. The “F” however would be permanently on your transcript.”*

#### **Policy for Missed Exams:**

There will not be any make-up exams. Anyone who missed an exam without being excused will get a score of zero for that exam. The only acceptable reasons for missing an exam are a serious illness and family emergency. In order to be excused, you need to get your reason for missing the exam approved either by the Dean of Student’s Office (for a family emergency), Schiffert Health Center (for physical illness) or Cook Counseling Center (for mental health issues). Scholarship athletes with competition-related conflicts need to bring me official documentation prior to the exam. If you have appropriately approved excused absence from an exam, then I will either give you a make-up exam or weigh your other exams more heavily, depending on the circumstances and my best judgment. In particular, job interviews, field trips from other courses, and sports competition from non-scholarship sports are NOT acceptable reasons for missing an exam. The notes that Schiffert distributes that indicate that you went to the clinic are not acceptable documentation – I need documentation that indicates that you were too ill to take the exam.

***\*Note that you have to have a final exam grade to earn a grade in this course.***

#### **Weather Policy**

If the University is officially closed on the day of an exam or case discussion, the exam or discussion will be held during the next scheduled class. Example: if the University is closed on a Friday with a scheduled midterm, the exam will be held the next Monday. The same policy applies to homework. If the University is closed, any outside-of-class review session is

automatically canceled. Note that canceling an exam review does NOT mean that the day of the exam will change. If the University is open, class will meet.

### **Topics List (Subject to Revision)**

#### **Part 1. Basic Economic Theories: Thinking like an Economist (about 5-6 weeks)**

- Unit 1: First Principles
- Unit 2: Econ Model-Production Possibilities Frontier
- Unit 3: Econ Model-Comparative Advantage
- Unit 4: Econ Model-Demand and Supply Analysis
- Unit 5: Government Intervention-Price Controls

#### **Part 2: Economic Analysis of Racial Disparities in Economic Outcomes (about 9 weeks)**

- Unit 0: Empirical Tools and Techniques for Applied Microeconomic Analysis
- Unit 0: Measuring Labor Market Outcomes
- Unit 1: Racial Disparities in Labor Market Outcomes: A Snapshot
- Unit 2: Intergenerational Persistence in Racial Disparity
- Unit 3: Understanding Fundamental Causes Leading to Racial Disparities in Economic Status
  - 1) Education
  - 2) Neighborhood Segregation
  - 3) Health
  - 4) The Justice System (if time permitting)