

Disciplina: Studies on Inequalities:
an Introduction

Tipo: Obrigatória Livre (optativa)

Professor: Tâmis Parron

Período: 2023.2

Turno: Noturno

Horário: 6^a (9h-13h)



Syllabus

Course Description:

As suggested in the cartoon above, the world has been rapidly changing. Inequalities are growing not only between countries, but also within countries, and powerful elites have been reaping the most of economic growth in the last decades. Such mechanisms of wealth extraction affect many aspects of our lives, including the legitimacy of the modern democracy as we know it. Within this pressing scenario, the emerging field of studies on inequalities has gained momentum within academia and beyond.

This course explores the problem of global inequalities from the perspective of history, methodology, and epistemology. In its first section, it provides students with a historical background on global inequalities. Topics include themes such as "great divergence debate," which explores the causes for the rise of Western economies in the modern era; and the recent "rise of the East", with deeply felt effects on Western markets and democracies.

In its second part, the course stimulates students to take critical approaches to influential works by renowned scholars in the field of inequality studies, such as Simon Kuznets, Thomas Piketty, Branko Milanović, Jeffrey Williamson, and Acemoglu and Robinson.

Finally, the course compares the literature on global inequalities with other analytical perspectives, especially modernization theory, world-system perspectives, and environmental studies, in order to distinguish the epistemological foundations of economic theories and historical social sciences.

Grading and course requirements:

1. Notes of assigned readings: 30% of your final grade
2. Seminar presentation or essay writing: 70% of your final grade.

Course Units:

I. The historical origins of global inequalities

- 1.1. The “Great Divergence Debate”: the rise of the West and the conquest of the East (16th to 19th century).
- 1.2 The end of the Great Divergence: the rise of the East and the crisis of Western democracy (20th century to 21 century).

II. Making sense of global inequalities: economic perspectives

- 2.1 Acemoglu and Robinson’s *Why Nations Fail*: how to conceptualize inequality in economics?
- 2.2 Williamson’s egalitarian leveling argument: how to measure inequalities?
- 2.3 Kuznets and Thomas Piketty: a political theory of inequality
- 2.4. Kuznets and Branko Milanović: an economicist theory of inequality

III. Reassessing inequalities from a world-ecological perspective

- 2.1 Modernization theory and a critical approach to the studies on inequality
- 2.2 The world-ecological foundations of the modern economic growth.
- 2.3. American fall and the rise of China: how to account for it?
- 2.4 Challenging inequalities in the 21th century

Required bibliography

- ACEMOGLU, Daron; ROBINSON, James A. *Why nations fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty*. London: Profile, 2012.
- ALLEN, Robert. *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*. Cambridge: CUP, 2009.
- GORDON, Robert. *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U. S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War*. Princeton: PUP, 2016.
- KUZNETS, Simon. *Economic Development, the Family, and Income Distribution: Selected Essays*. 1989.
- MALM, Andreas. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. London: Verso, 2016.
- MOORE, Jason. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. London: Verso, 2015.
- PIKETTY, Thomas. *Le capital au XXIe siècle*. Paris: Seuil, 2013.
- PIKETTY, Thomas. *Capital et Idéologie*. Paris: Seuil, 2019.
- POMERANZ, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence. China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: PUP, 2021.
- MILANOVIĆ, Branko. *Capitalism, alone: the future of the system that rules the world*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.
- STIGLITZ, Joseph. *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and What We Can Do about Them*. New York: Norton, 2015.
- WILLIAMSON, Jeffrey. “Latin American Inequality: Colonial Origins, Commodity Booms or a Missed Twentieth-Century Leveling?” *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 3, 324–341.