

## Economics

**Also relevant for: Business Studies, Sociology, Law, Political Science, Gender Studies, Social Sciences**

Course: European Economics, Economics

Group of courses: Law, Economics and Social Sciences

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## Course objectives:

Students should learn to analyse and discuss gender differences in economic behaviour and economic outcomes as well as the determinants of such differences. They should become aware of the interconnection between gender and the economy taking both standard economic and heterodox theories as well as empirical evidence into account.

## Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

### 1 Reproduction of stereotypes in teaching material:

Many economic textbooks and self-composed problem sets reproduce stereotypes and reinforce subconscious bias (not just with respect to gender, but also other dimensions like ethnicity). It is possible that the lack of female role models in economics makes the field less attractive for women. While you cannot rewrite an entire introductory economics textbook, exchanging names and pronouns in examples that you use in class is an easy fix for making any topic more inclusive. Moreover, the reproduction of stereotypes is problematic, but easy to avoid by reframing examples. Consider these examples of seemingly harmless sexism in economics teaching that are still widely used today:

- Battle of sexes: he wants to see boxing, she wants to go to the ballet
- Hyperbolic discounting: she wants to go on a diet, he wants to save for college
- GDP: a maid's services count towards GDP unless she marries the landlord and provides them free of charge

A recent study by Stevenson & Zlotnick (2018) analysed the representation of women in introductory economics textbooks, coding every mention of a real or fictional person in the eight most popular books in the US. Despite their purpose to explain the basics of economic activity and the behaviour of "individuals who make up the economy," (Mankiw, 2018, cited in Stevenson & Zlotnick, 2018, p. 180), these books in fact depict a male dominated economy: less than 20 percent of the people mentioned are female (in Stevenson & Zlotnick, 2018, p. 182). Furthermore, men and women appear in different contexts and carry out different types of activities: "Men are more likely to be analyzing or making a decision, and in agriculture, business, sports, and policy. Women are more likely to have a decision being made for them. Women are more likely to be engaging in a domestic setting, or in education or entertainment. Finally, women – or female pronouns – are less likely to be used in a numeric example" (Stevenson & Zlotnick, 2018, p. 184). A similar study exists for German language literature: Beblo (2018) develops a gender test for economics textbooks, which takes into account the use of gender-inclusive language, the analysis of gender issues and issues that are of particular relevance to women, and the reproduction of gender stereotypes in examples. Based on these criteria, she examines eight commonly used German (translations of) introductory textbooks. She finds that none of the books passes the test entirely. Only four use inclusive language, three discuss gender issues as economically relevant (but exclusively in the narrow area of labour economics and home production), and most examples or case studies are either gender neutral or follow the common stereotypes (e.g. men as the reference group, women as the exception from the norm).

### 2 Gender aspects in economics

Gender is a relevant category in nearly any subfield of economics. While the economics of gender has emerged as a subfield in its own right in recent years, it nonetheless touches on a variety of topics taught in 'standard' economics classes:

- Labour economics:
  - labour supply decision
  - occupational segregation
  - labour market discrimination
  - human capital theory
  - gender wage gaps
  - compensating wage differentials
  - unions
- Family & population economics:
  - marriage & divorce
  - fertility
- Economics of organisation and personnel
- Experimental economics
- Public economics
- Finance
  - gender budgeting
  - gender-specific effects of tax regimes, social security policies, family policies, ...
- International trade:
  - effects of international trade and direct foreign investments on women in developing countries
  - gender-specific effects of economic crises
- Development economics:
  - gendered aspects of development, measuring gender equality as an aspect of development
- Economics of crime:
  - domestic violence
  - prostitution
- Political economy
- Economic history

Important tools of analysis include:

- Comparative advantage (household specialisation decision)
- Game theory (cooperative and noncooperative models of intra-family bargaining)
- Principalagent theory (for marriage contracts, statistical discrimination)
- HeckscherOhlin model
- VonNeumann-Morgenstern utility theorem
- Quantitative empirical analysis (description and causal tests)

## **Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:**

Using the textbooks listed below, it is possible to integrate and discuss gender aspects in nearly every economics course. Beyond that, courses like Economics of Gender can provide deeper insights into gender-specific aspects of economic issues. Worldwide, the economic outcomes and economic behaviour of women and men differ. The course Economics of Gender provides tools to analyse and explain these differences from an economics perspective. Such a seminar/lecture could include the following topics:

1. Preferences: Do women and men behave differently in economic situations?

2. Family economics: What determines the balance of power in a household?
3. Labour market and discrimination
4. Marriage & divorce
5. Fertility
6. Globalisation
7. Suffrage

## **Degree Stage:**

Avoiding the reproduction of gender stereotypes is recommendable at any stage. Taking a gender perspective and addressing gender aspects in the specific course material is desirable from the very first introduction to economics class and important throughout the entire course of studies.

Second year bachelor and above: a stand-alone course Economics of Gender can be adjusted to any level.

## **Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:**

- Blau, F, M A Ferber, A E Winkler (2014). The Economics of Women, Men, and Work, 7. Edition. Pearson.
- Eswaran, M (2014). Why Gender matters in Economics. Princeton University Press.
- Jacobsen, JP (2007). The Economics of Gender. Blackwell.
- Stevenson, B., & Zlotnik, H. (2018). Representations of Men and Women in Introductory Economics Textbooks. In AEA Papers and Proceedings (180-185).
- Beblo, M. (2018). Gender in VWL Lehrbüchern. Mimeo, Universität Hamburg.

## **Journals:**

[Feminist Economics, Review of the Economics of the Household, Journal of Gender Studies](#)  
(interdisciplinary)