

Syllabus

Overview

This course applies economics to the family. Topics covered include the economics of marriage and divorce, bargaining within the household, household production, the economics of fertility, and the economics of parenting. The specific questions addressed by the course fall into two categories. On the one hand, the course uses economics to understand the family, such as who marries whom, and how many children (if any) people choose to have. On the other hand, the course also considers the wider implications for family decisions for the economy at large, such as the repercussions of assortative mating in marriage for inequality in a society, and the relevance of family decisions for long-run economic development.

Teaching and Assessment

There will be 17 lectures, to be held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Frances Searle Building 1441. Discussion sections will be held Fridays at from 11 to 11:50 a.m. in University Hall 102. Discussion sections will be led by the teaching assistant for the class, Francesca Truffa.

There will be problem sets that focus on questions that prepare you for the exams, and class projects that involve empirical work and the writing of short research reports.

There will be an in-class midterm on Tuesday, February 18. There will be a single final examination for the course on Wednesday, March 18, from 9 to 11 a.m. For students who score higher on the midterm than on the final, the midterm will make up 20 percent of the grade, problem sets and class projects will account for another 50 percent total, and the final makes up 30 percent. For students who score higher on the final than on the midterm, the midterm grade will be discarded: the final will make up 50 percent of the grade, and assignments/projects 50 percent.

Contact Information

The easiest way to get in contact with me if you have any questions is via e-mail. My address is:

doepke@northwestern.edu

My office hours are Thursdays from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. in Kellogg Global Hub 3433. If you have a conflict with this time slot, you can email me to make appointments at other times.

Francesca Truffa's (the teaching assistant) email address is:

francescatruffa2021@u.northwestern.edu

Her office hours are on Mondays from 4 to 6 p.m. in Kellogg Global Hub 3411. If you have a conflict with this time slot, you can email Francesca to make appointments at other times.

A web site for this course will be maintained on Canvas, and announcements and other information relevant for the course will be posted there.

Readings

The following book is assigned for the class:

Matthias Doepke and Fabrizio Zilibotti. 2019. *Love, Money, and Parenting: How Economics Explains the Way We Raise Our Kids*. Princeton University Press.

Given that I am a coauthor of the book, profits from book sales will be donated to charity. The book covers primarily the topics of fertility and parenting. Additional readings will be assigned throughout the class, and selected articles and lectures notes which will be posted on the course web site.

Topics

The following is a preliminary list of topics for the course.

1. The gains from marriage and cohabitation; household production; specialization in the household.
2. The marriage market; assortative mating.
3. Household bargaining; divorce.
4. Fertility choice; demographics and economic growth.
5. The economics of parenting.
6. Household labor supply; macroeconomic implications of family economics.