

Course syllabus for PhD course

Course part of the research school: People, Society and Sustainability

Department of Urban and Rural Development

Early Modern Social Inequality

Tidigmodern ojämlikhet

Higher education credits

7,5 HEC

Subject

Agrarian History

Possible Additional subject/subjects

Course type

Subject course

Language

English

Prerequisites

Accepted as a PhD student

Objective

Upon completion of this course, the students will be able to:

- Describe how various concepts of (in-)equality have been used in historical societies and in modern scholarship.
- Describe how social and economic inequality changed over time and varied between various regions of Europe (especially Sweden) during the Early Modern period.
- Describe the methods and sources used by scholars for studying inequality in Early Modern Europe and discuss their different potentials and shortcomings.
- Discuss scholars' different explanations for why and how inequality grew during the Early Modern period.
- Discuss effects that inequality had for Early Modern people and society.

Content

The objective of this course is to give students insights into the research on inequality in Early Modern Europe in general, and Sweden in particular (c. 1500–1800): the main empirical findings, as well as the methods and the theoretical explanatory models used. The course includes the historiography of how (in-)equality rose as an intellectual concept and as an interest of research; the latest

findings concerning how wealth and income inequality shifted over time and between regions; the debates regarding why and how inequality grew; and what consequences inequality had for the population of Early Modern Europe.

Examination

Obligatory active participation in the discussions of four seminars (according to the course schedule), including preparatory readings (according to the reading list). A final written assignment of about 4000 words (8 pages), relating to the main themes of the course.

Contact for application and further information

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Literature

Required reading will be assigned to students four weeks before the course starts.

Additional Information

This course is part of the research school People, Society and Sustainability, a joined research school between the Department of Economics and the Department of Urban and Rural Development.

Course schedule (see next page)

Course Schedule (preliminary)

The course is planned to take place during the second half of Spring Term 2024 (April–June), at 50% (e.g., for 10 weeks).

The course consists of four seminars, each addressing one or two main themes. The course concludes with a final written examination.

The first seminar theme is “Ideas and Social Conceptualizations of Inequality in Early Modern Europe”. This introduces how Early Modern (in-)equality has been recently conceptualized, studied, and explained by scholars. We will discuss the intellectual historiography of (in-)equality as a theoretical concept and as an object of historical research (McMahon; Milanovic; Piketty; O’Sullivan; Wisman & Smith). We will further discuss a couple of examples of cultural concepts arguably central to debates concerning inequality of Early Modern societies: freedom, the middling sort, and the moral economy (Muldrew; Patterson; Trivellano).

The second seminar is the first of two that deal with economic inequality in Early Modern Europe. The readings include recent overviews of the field (Alfani; Piketty; Scheidel) as well as some (of the rapidly growing number of) studies of inequality in various Early Modern societies (Alfani, Gierok & Schaff; Allen; Andersson & Molinder; Bengtsson, Missiaia, Olsson & Svensson; Bengtsson, Olsson & Svensson; Malinowski & van Zanden). The discussion will address the various methods employed in those studies, as well as their theoretical and conceptual underpinnings.

The third seminar takes up the theme of economic inequality, but instead focusses on the growing interregional inequality in Early Modern Europe, addressing e.g., the debate on the Little Divergence (Alfani & Ryckbosch; Fochesato; de Pleijt & van Zanden), as well as intra-state regional inequality (Enflo & Missiaia), and the role of empire (Bhambra). Based on this, we discuss some of the main explanations proposed for growing regional inequality during the Early Modern period (Alfani; van Bavel; Henriques & Palma; Milanovic).

In the fourth and final seminar, we will discuss a couple of the main institutions of labour through which inequality was perpetuated; semi-landlessness (Fertig, Paping & French; Uppenberg), and service (Andersson; Whittle), and how these were intertwined with growing inequality. The seminar also addresses the question of what the major consequences of inequality were in Early Modern Europe, through studies of disease and mortality (de Haro et al; Harper; Kendall), and of living standards, wages, and vulnerability (Bengtsson & Svensson; Humphries & Weisdorf; de Keyzer).

Literature (preliminary)

Ideas and Social Conceptualizations of Inequality

- McMahon, Darrin, *Equality: The History of an Elusive Idea* (2023). [selection]
- Milanovic, Branko, *Visions of Inequality: From the French Revolution to the End of the Cold War* (2023). [selection]

- Muldrew, Craig, “The ‘Middling Sort’: An Emergent Cultural Identity”, in K. Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England 1500–1750* (2018).
- Patterson, Orlando, “The Ancient and Medieval Origins of Modern Freedom”, in S. Mintz & J. Stauffer (eds.), *The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform* (2007).
- Piketty, Thomas, *Capital and ideology* (2020). [selection]
- O’Sullivan, Mary, “Constructing a Big History of Inequality”, *History Compass* (2022). [https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/dehes/files/7216/4932/3128/History Compass - 2022 - O Sullivan - Constructing a big history of inequality.pdf](https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/dehes/files/7216/4932/3128/History%20Compass%20-%202022%20-%20O%20Sullivan%20-%20Constructing%20a%20big%20history%20of%20inequality.pdf)
- Trivellato, Francesca, “The Moral Economies of Early Modern Europe”, *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 11:2 (2020), pp. 193–201. <https://albert.ias.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/3e667dbd-8a38-4f8b-9b8d-bd835b382e5b/content>
- Wisman, Jon D. & Smith, James F., “Legitimizing Inequality: Fooling Most of the People All of the Time”, *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70:4 (2011), pp. 974-1013. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41329171>

Economic inequality I: Income and Wealth Inequality within Early Modern Societies

- Alfani, Guido, “Wealth and Income Inequality in the Long Run of History”, in C. Diebolt & M. Hauptert (eds.), *Handbook of Cliometrics* (2019). <https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-030-00181-0>
- Alfani, Guido, Gierok, V., & Schaff, F., “Economic Inequality in Preindustrial Germany, ca. 1300–1850”, *The Journal of Economic History*, 82:1 (2022), pp. 87–125. doi:10.1017/S0022050721000607
- Allen, Robert C., “Class structure and inequality during the industrial revolution: lessons from England’s social tables, 1688–1867”, *The Economic History Review* 2018. <http://onala.free.fr/allen18.pdf>
- Andersson, Martin & Molinder, Jakob, “Swedish Income Inequality in 1613” (2023).
- Bengtsson, Erik, Missiaia, Anna, Olsson, Mats & Svensson, Patrick, “Wealth Inequality in Sweden, 1750–1900”, *The Economic History Review* 71:3 (2018), pp. 772–794. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ehr.12576>
- Bengtsson, Erik, Olsson, Mats & Svensson, Patrick, “Mercantilist Inequality: Wealth and Poverty in Stockholm 1650–1750”, *The Economic History Review* 75:1 (2022), pp. 157–180. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ehr.13081>
- Malinowski, M. & van Zanden, J. L., “Income and its distribution in preindustrial Poland”, *XX* 11:3 (2017), pp. 375–404.
- Piketty, Thomas, *Capital in the twenty-first century* (2014). [selection]
- Scheidel, Walter, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (2018). [selection]

Further reading

Bengtsson, Erik, *Världens jämlikaste land?* (2020)

Economic inequality II: Regional inequality, and its explanations

- Alfani, Guido and Ryckbosch, Wouter, "Growing Apart in Early Modern Europe? A Comparison of Inequality Trends in Italy and the Low Countries, 1500–1800", *Explorations in Economic History* 62 (2016), pp. 143–153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2016.07.003>.
- Alfani, Guido, *The Lion's Share: Inequality and the Rise of the Fiscal State in Preindustrial Europe* (2019). [selection]
- van Bavel, Bas, "Wealth Inequality in Pre-Industrial Europe: What Role Did Associational Organizations Have?", *The Economic History Review* 75:3 (2022). pp. 643–666. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ehr.13137>
- Bhambra, Gurinder K., "Narrating inequality, eliding empire", *British Journal of Sociology* 72 (2021), pp. 69–78. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1468-4446.12804>
- Enflo, Kerstin & Missiaia, Anna, "Between Malthus and the Industrial Take-Off: Regional Inequality in Sweden, 1571–1850", *The Economic History Review* 73:2 (2020), pp. 431–454.
- Fochesato, Mattia, "Origins of Europe's north-south divide: Population changes, real wages and the 'little divergence' in early modern Europe". *Explorations in Economic History* 70 (2018), pp. 91–131. doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2018.07.002
- Henriques, A. & Palma, N., "Comparative European Institutions and the Little Divergence, 1385–1800", *J Econ Growth* 28 (2023), pp. 259–294. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-022-09213-5>
- Milanovic, Branko, "Towards and explanation of inequality in premodern societies: the role of colonies, urbanization, and high population density", *The Economic History Review*, 71:4, pp. 1029–1047 (2018)
- de Pleijt, Alexandra M. & van Zanden, Jan Luiten, "Accounting for the 'Little Divergence': What drove economic growth in pre-industrial Europe, 1300–1800?", *European Review of Economic History*, 20:4 (2016), pp. 387–409. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ereh/hew013>

Institutions of Inequality and Its Consequences

- Andersson, Martin, *Från trälar till tjänstefolk: Legofolk i Sverige 1250–1600* (2023). [selection]
- Bengtsson, Erik & Svensson, Patrick, "The Living Standards of the Labouring Classes in Sweden, 1750–1900: Evidence from Rural Probate Inventories", *Agricultural History Review* 70:1, pp. 49–69 (2020).
- Fertig, Christine, Paping, Richard & French, Henry (eds.), *Landless Households in Rural Europe 1600–1900* (2022). [selection]
- de Haro, Luque et al., "Inequality in mortality in pre-industrial southern Europe during an epidemic episode: socio-economic determinants (eighteenth - nineteenth centuries Spain)", *Economics & Human Biology* 40. DOI: 10.1016/j.ehb.2020.100941

- Harper, Kyle, *Plagues Upon the Earth: Disease and the Course of Human History* (2021). [selection]
- Humphries, Jane & Weisdorf, Jacob, “Unreal Wages? Real Income and Economic Growth in England, 1260–1850”, *The Economic Journal* 129 (2019), pp. 2867–2887, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/uez017>
- Kendall, Ellen J. et al., “Health Inequality in Britain before 1750”, *SSM Population Health* 16 (2021). [10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100957](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100957)
- de Keyzer, Maïka, “The Impact of Inequality on Social Vulnerability in Pre-Modern Breckland”, *Journal for the History of Environment and Society* 4 (2019), pp. 71–101. DOI: 10.1484/J.JHES.5.120676
- Uppenberg, Carolina, “Contracted Coercion: Land, Labour and Gender in the Swedish Crofter Institution”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* (2023), pp. 1–22.
- Whittle, Jane (ed.), *Servants in Rural Europe 1400–1900* (2017). [selection]