



Microfinance and Financial Inclusion

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1. Course Objectives

In this course, we will review the global landscape of financial services available to *unbanked* and *underbanked* populations. We will consider the tools we need to shrink the wealth gap. We will focus our efforts on developing practical solutions for economically-neglected populations to access financial services including, but not limited to, credit, savings and insurance. We explore the importance of technology and digital platforms in breaking down geographical and cost barriers to access these critical services. We will discuss ways to improve access to capital markets as a means of breaking down inequality. We will learn from visiting practitioners in the field and those who have directly benefited from existing microfinance programs. The course will emphasize experiential learning and use timely, recent and relevant literature to drive dialogue and discussion in the classroom.

2. Class Schedule

Segment One: Closing the Gap through Financial Inclusion

Week 1, 1/24: Class Intro, History of Microfinance and the Wealth Gap

Week 2, 1/31: Wealth Inequality and Community Development Corporations in the U.S.

Week 3, 2/7: Local, Impact and Socially Responsible Investing

Week 4, 2/14: The Role of Community Development Financial Institutions

Week 5, 2/24: Income inequality - Universal Basic Income vs. Wage Subsidies

Week 6, 2/28: Tax Code and Legislative Influence in Financial Inclusion

Segment Two: Third World Solutions for First World Problems

Week 7, 3/7: Myths & History of Microfinance, Microcredit Part I

Week 8, 3/14: Microcredit continued

Week 9, 3/28: Microsavings Programs

Week 10, 4/4: Microinsurance Programs

Week 11, 4/11: The Mobile, Digital World of Microfinance

Week 12, 4/22 (virtual): Public Health and the Environment in Microfinance

Week 13, 4/25: Microfinance Practitioner Panel & Course Wrap-up

3. Course Requirements

Our class follows the official Tufts grading guidelines:

A - Superior work

B - Meritorious work

C - Work without marked merit or defect

D - Unsatisfactory work

F - Failure

The addition of a plus (+) or minus (-) to the letter grade can further distinguish among students' work.

Your overall grade consists of the following components: student engagement, two short writing assignments, a midterm exam and a research/policy paper. Your entire body of work throughout the semester will determine your final grade.

Student Engagement - Engagement can be demonstrated in many ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, participation in classroom discussion, creating student dialogue and sharing current events.

Short writing assignments - Due on weeks 4 and 11, students will be required to complete a small collection of short essays to reflect their comprehension of topics and readings covered in the preceding weeks.

Midterm Examination - The midterm exam will likely be a take-home exam consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Research/Policy Paper - Your final project for the semester is a culmination of research, surveys and interviews you will conduct throughout the semester. The output will be a written summary and highlighting this work.

4. Readings

The only book you will be asked to purchase or borrow for the course is '*Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*'. Your first short writing assignment will be reflecting on '*Scarcity*'. Otherwise, the instructor will provide required readings on a weekly basis from public, online sources.

5. Class Notes

I pledge to provide more than one mental break during every class.

I ask that non-course related or non-emergency laptop and mobile device usage take place only during break times.

We will make every effort to make this a paper-free semester.

The expectation in an in-person course is that you will be physically present for every session. You will be expected to provide proper documentation if you cannot make class for health reasons. If you anticipate having to miss class for a non-health related reason, the expectation is that it will be communicated with me with advance notice. I will work with you individually to ensure you don't fall behind regardless of the reason for missing a class.