



Seminar (“Research Module”) in International Economics

“Inequality: Measurement, Causes, Consequences”

Winter Semester 2014/15

Motivation:

In recent years, the discussion about inequality and distributional justice has gained prominence both in academic circles and in the society as a whole. A general feeling that both wage and wealth disparities have been increasing substantially since the late 1970s has stirred some influential research, with the success of Thomas Piketty’s massive treatise on long-run inequality documenting the broad interest in the topic.

The goal of this research module is to analyze the causes and consequences of inequality in more detail. Among the questions we are planning to approach are:

- What are the concepts to measure income and wealth inequality?
- How have standard measures of inequality evolved over time – both at the national and at the international level?
- How do we measure social mobility and why is it important?
- What are the causes of inequality? How important are technological change and globalization?
- What are the consequences of inequality? How does it affect economic growth, global imbalances and financial stability?
- How much inequality does a society tolerate? What does a “just” society look like? Does inequality reduce the well-being of people?

A detailed list of topics including some first references will be presented at the start of the seminar.

Important Dates (subject to change):

30.10.2014, 2.30 – 4 pm:	Introductory meeting and presentation of topics (attendance is mandatory)
through 07.11.2014:	Distribution of topics
08.01.2015, 2 – 6 pm and 09.01.2015, 9 am – 6 pm:	} Student presentations (attendance is mandatory)
20.03.2015, 12 am:	

Participants:

The seminar is offered to students in the **masters program “International Economics and Public Policy” (MIEPP)**.

Basic References:

OECD (2011): *Divided We Stand - Why Inequality Keeps Rising* (downloadable under <http://www.oecd.org/social/soc/dividedwestandwhyinequalitykeepsrising.htm>). Read the introductory chapter (“An Overview of Growing Income Inequalities in OECD Countries: Main Findings”), available under <http://www.oecd.org/social/soc/49499779.pdf>

Piketty (2014): *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge MA (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press). Read the Introduction.

Read the articles on inequality in the september-2011 edition of the IMF’s *Finance and Development*, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2011/09/>

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