



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

UPADM-GP 268

Race, Immigration, and Financial Citizenship in the U.S. Spring 2023

Instructor Information

- Instructor: Dr. Nallely Mejia
- Email: nallelymejia@nyu.edu
- Office Address: Puck 3087
- Office Hours: By appointment. I'm generally at Wagner T-TH.

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Fridays 2:00-4:30pm, January 26 to May 3
- Class Location: 31 Washington Place, Silver Center, Room 406

Course Prerequisites

- N/A

Course Description

In this course, students will explore and examine financial citizenship in the United States and how it intersects with existing inequalities by race and immigration status. How financial products and services reproduce inequality carry deep consequences for it means to belong, how people are treated within the U.S. economic system, and what policy recommendations can be adopted. Students will examine these broader questions across various weekly topics, including banking and dignity, homeownership, entrepreneurship, and emerging financial technology.

The first part of the course will trace the history and policies that shape financial citizenship in the U.S. while the second part of the course will focus on the consequences of financial citizenship (or lack thereof) and why this matters for economic, mental, and social well-being.

Course and Learning Objectives

Following this course, students should be able to:

1. Define financial citizenship, describe and analyze major trends in financial inclusion in the U.S.
2. Understand how financial inclusion (and exclusion) are stratified by race, gender, immigration status, etc. and the barriers to financial exclusion faced by various marginalized groups
3. Assess evidence and readings from various disciplines to draw insights and evaluate explanations for wealth inequality
4. Organize and communicate their ideas and arguments in a clear, written form using academic sources to support their claims

Learning Assessment Table

Graded Assignment	Course Objective Covered
Class participation	1, 2, 3
Reading Responses	1, 2, 3, 4
Net Worth and Zip Code Paper	1, 2, 3, 4
Inequality Infographic	1, 2, 3, 4

Required Readings

Links and PDFs for required readings and additional materials are available via Brightspace. If you are interested, I will share additional readings and materials (e.g. podcasts) – however, completing the required readings is the expectation for class.

Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

Below is the breakdown of class assignments and percentage of your final grade as well as how each assignment corresponds to course objectives.

Individual Assessment

- Class Participation,

- Reading Responses,
- Financial Services Audit, and
- Inequality Infographic Assignment

All assignments should be submitted via Brightspace. The formatting requirements are: 1-inch margins, single-spaced, 12 pt. font size in a standard font (i.e. Arial or Times New Roman).

Class Participation – 20%

This is a small class - your presence and participation are valuable and important to our class sessions. We all want to hear from you. 😊 Class participation involves attending class sessions, going to office hours, active listening, asking questions, and contributing to in-class discussions. The quality of your contributions is more important than the quantity.

Reading Responses – 15%

Across the semester, students will complete four reading responses— these reading responses (300 words) are due by 11:59pm on Thursday evening before our class meeting. These responses are not meant to be a summary of the readings, but rather a place for you to share some initial thoughts and questions in addition to keeping everyone accountable for the readings ahead of our class meeting.

Financial Services Audit (Due March 8) – 20%

In this assignment, students will understand and think critically about the biases embedded in financial tools and sign-up practices. Students will select and walk through a financial service or tool – examples include traditional bank sign-ups, financial technology applications (e.g. venmo, cashapp), or tools like credit scoring. The focus of this assignment is to lay out the onboarding process and then critique the potential roadblocks that marginalized groups (e.g. low-income, undocumented, and/or unhoused) would face in the sign-up process and/or the use of this service. Finally, students will reflect and reimagine what a human-centered and dignified service or product might look like. For this assignment, students will submit a one-page write up of their findings alongside their recommendations; for their recommendation, students have creative control and may submit a written proposal, a visual mock-up or drawings, or propose something else (for my approval). A rubric will be available on Brightspace.

Inequality Infographic Assignment – 45%

For this assignment, students will select a topic related to the course theme. This assignment is made up of several smaller assignments that will be turned in across the semester. A rubric will be available on Brightspace.

Annotated Bibliography (April 1, 5%)- Students will submit a list of 5 sources. These should include at least 2 peer-reviewed articles alongside some contemporary data sources for their infographic. The “annotations” for each source may summarize its information, evaluate the source, and/or reflect on its use for your infographic assignment.

In-Class Peer Feedback (April in-class TBD)- Students will work in pairs or small groups to share feedback on a draft of their infographic. The class will have guidelines for giving and receiving feedback.

Infographic (April 26, 25%)- Students will use Canva (or another platform of their choosing) to create their infographic. Students will be graded on quality of their research and data, communication of information, visual design and presentation, and references.

Final Reflection (May 1, 15%)- Along with the infographic, students will write a 2-page double-spaced reflection that details their process for creating the infographic, questions that came up, and/or obstacles they encountered as they created their infographic. If you decide to share your infographic on social media, you may also detail what kind of responses or feedback you received.

Late Submission Policy for Assignments

Unless otherwise stated, assignments will be due on the original due date listed here in the syllabus and on Brightspace.

I recognize that sometimes life has other plans – in consideration, all students are granted three flex days for the semester. This means that you can submit an assignment up to three days late without penalty. You can use these flex days for any assignment(s) before the final assignment, no questions asked. Send me an email and let me know how many flex days you want to use.

With no remaining flex days, late assignments will be penalized after the deadline. Each 24-hour period is a 5% deduction from the total grade.

If you are experiencing an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible.

Overview of the Semester

- **Week 1 - January 26 - Course Introduction and**
- **Week 2 - February 2 -**
- **Week 3 - February 9 -**
- **Week 4 - February 16 -**

- **Week 5 - February 23 -**
- **Week 6 - March 1 - No class**
- **Week 7 - March 8 -**
- **Week 8 - March 15 -**
- **Week 9 - March 22 - No class**
- **Week 10 - March 29 -**
- **Week 11 - April 5 -**
- **Week 12 - April 12 -**
- **Week 13 - April 19 -**
- **Week 14 - April 26 -**
- **Week 15 - May 3 - Final Class and Infographics Sharing**

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

A	> 93.0	4.0
A-	> 90.0	3.7
B+	> 87.0	3.3
B	> 83.0	3.0
B-	> 80.0	2.7
C +	> 77.0	2.3
C	> 73.0	2.0
C-	> 70.0	1.7
F	< 70.0	0.0

Detailed Course Overview

Week 1 - January 26 - Course Introduction and Financial Citizenship

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Wherry, Frederick F., Kristin S. Seefeldt, Anthony S. Alvarez, and Jose Quinonez. 2019. "Introduction: Separate and Unequal." Pp. 1–21 in *Credit Where It's Due: Rethinking Financial Citizenship*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Discussion Questions

What is financial citizenship? How does it relate to contemporary trends in inequality? Why is financial citizenship important?

Week 2 - February 2 - Financial Exclusion in the U.S.

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Pulliam, Isabel V. Sawhill and Christopher. 2019. "Six Facts about Wealth in the United States." *Brookings Institute* (blog). June 25, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/06/25/six-facts-about-wealth-in-the-united-states/>.
2. Wherry, Frederick F., Kristin S. Seefeldt, and Anthony S. Alvarez. 2019. *Credit Where It's Due: Rethinking Financial Citizenship*. Russell Sage Foundation. (Chapter 1-2)

Discussion Questions (Continued)

What is financial citizenship? How does it relate to contemporary trends in inequality? Why is financial citizenship important?

Week 3 - February 9 - Tracing the Roots of Inequality

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Baradaran, M. 2019. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and The Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 1 and 3)

Discussion Questions

How have past and contemporary policies contributed to financial exclusion of marginalized communities in the U.S.? What is the role of large institutions, such as banks?

Week 4 - February 16 - Banking and Belonging

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Faber, Jacob, and Terri Friedline. 2018. "The Racialized Costs of Banking." *New America*, June 21, 2018, <http://newamerica.org/family-centered-social-policy/reports/racialized-costs-banking/>
2. Baradaran, M. 2015. *How the Other Half Banks: Exclusion, Exploitation, and the Threat to Democracy*. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 5, "Unbanked and "Unwanted")

Discussion Questions

What does contemporary exclusion from these services look like? What are the obstacles that people of color face? Why does access to financial services matter?

Week 5 - February 23 - Debt and Making Ends Meet

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Morduch, Jonathan., and Schneider, Rachel. 2017. *The Financial Diaries: How American Families Cope in a World of Uncertainty*. Princeton University Press. (Chapter 5 "Borrowing")
2. Baradaran, M. 2015. *How the Other Half Banks: Exclusion, Exploitation, and the Threat to Democracy*. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 4, "How the Other Half Borrows")

Discussion Questions

How does the average family in the U.S. make ends meet? What are common sources of debt in the U.S.? How does debt create shame and guilt?

Week 6 - March 1 - No class (conference travel), scheduled office hours meetings.

For this week, students will sign-up for office hours to discuss their audit assignment (due the following week).

Week 7 - March 8 - Incarceration and Compounding Debts

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Pager, Devah. 2003. "[The Mark of a Criminal Record](#)". *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (5):937-975.

2. Martin Karin D., Sandra Susan Smith and Wendy Still. 2017. "[Shackled to Debt: Criminal Justice Financial Obligations and the Barriers to Re-Entry They Create.](#)"

Discussion Questions

What are the obstacles faced by previously incarcerated adults to reintegration? How does previous incarceration impede financial inclusion?

Week 8 - March 15 - Legal Status

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. McConnell, Eileen Díaz. 2015. "Diverging Dividends, Diverging Futures: Nativity, Citizenship Status, Legal Status, and the Non-Housing Asset Accumulation of Latinos." *Ethnicities* 15(2):255–81.
2. Rugh, Jacob S. and Matthew Hall. 2016. "Deporting the American Dream: Immigration Enforcement and Latino Foreclosures." *Sociological Science* 3:1053–76.

Discussion Questions

How does legal status impact financial inclusion and wealth-building? How do undocumented immigrants navigate precarious work and financial decisions?

Week 9 - March 22 - Spring Break, No Class

Recommendation: Spend some time selecting your infographic topic (if you have not already) and finding sources for your annotated bibliography.

Week 10 - March 29 - Homeownership and Predatory Inclusion

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Dickerson, Michele. 2014. *Homeownership and America's Financial Underclass*. Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 2 + 6)
2. Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2019. *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. The University of North Carolina Press. (Chapter 1)

Discussion Questions

How did homeownership become a part of the American Dream? Why do people pursue homeownership? What are alternative ways of belonging to a community?

Week 11 - April 5 - Giving Back to Communities and Family Part 1.

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Rucks-Ahidiana, Zawadi. 2017. "Cultural implications of historical exclusion for the racial wealth gap: How ideal financial behavior varies by race." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5: 68–89.
2. Hill, Jasmine D. 2022. "Kin Support of the Black Middle Class: Negotiating Need, Norms, and Class Background." *Social Problems* 69, 1: 3–21.

Discussion Questions

How are financial behaviors racialized? What is the role of family and community in making ends meet?

Week 12 - April 12 - Giving Back to Communities and Family Part 2.

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Vallejo, Jody. 2012. *Barrios to Burbs: The Making of the Mexican American Middle Class*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. (Chapter 4)
2. Thai, Hung Cam. 2014. *Insufficient Funds: The Culture of Money in Low-Wage Transnational Families*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. (Chapter 1)

Discussion Questions

What is the role of family and community in making ends meet? What does financial support look like in immigrant families?

Week 13 - April 19 - Entrepreneurship

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Valdez, Zulema. 2011. *The New Entrepreneurs: How Race, Class, and Gender Shape American Enterprise*. 1st ed. Redwood City: Stanford University Press. (Chapter 3)

Discussion Questions

How and why do marginalized communities start their own businesses? How do enclaves help or hinder these communities?

Week 14 - April 26 - Retirement

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Amuedo-Dorantes, Catalina and Susan Pozo. 2015. "The Impact of the Recession on the Wealth of Older Immigrant and Native Households in the United States." *IZA Journal of Labor Policy* 4(6):1-27.

Discussion Questions

How does financial inclusion (or exclusion) look for older age adults? Why does retirement matter? Who will retire?

Week 15 - May 3 - Final Class and Infographic Sharing

Assigned Reading (found on Brightspace)

1. Wherry, Frederick F., Kristin S. Seefeldt, and Anthony S. Alvarez. 2019. *Credit Where It's Due: Rethinking Financial Citizenship*. Russell Sage Foundation. (Chapter 3 and Intro)

Discussion Questions

What is financial citizenship? Why is financial citizenship important? Across the semester, what has stood out to you? Why did you select your infographic topic?

Brightspace

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the Brightspace site. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website. If I extend a due date, I will share that in-class and as an announcement on Brightspace.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

NYU’s Wellness Exchange

[NYU’s Wellness Exchange](#) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.