

This semester, I took the Economics of Inequality taught by Professor Kirsten Cornelson. This class aims to understand the root causes of inequality through an economic lens. For the final project, each student has to write a twenty-five-page paper about a policy that aims to reduce inequality. Students are expected to write to an audience that has zero knowledge or economic background about their chosen topic. My topic is expanding affirmative action for women and racial minorities. Professor Cornelson also assigned a forty-five-minute group presentation that should give my classmates the basic overview of affirmative action.

For the final paper, Professor Cornelson broke it down into several topics, each with their own sub questions that had to be answered. The sections are introduction, problem overview, theory, evidence and conclusion. For the problem overview, I had to look up some basic facts and history that could explain to the reader the background for how affirmative action is formed. For the theory and evidence, I needed to use economic papers that provided a basic economic model that could be understood by anyone. Since Professor Cornelson did not specify what kind of affirmative action policy I had to argue for, there had to be papers that discussed affirmative action on the college and postgraduate level. Professor Cornelson had already given a few papers but I sought out guidance to find more papers.

Since affirmative action can fall underneath education, I requested a library consultation with Ms Leslie Morgan. On April 3rd, Leslie and I met, and she walked me through how to properly utilize the advanced search option when looking for peer-reviewed academic papers. Leslie explained the differences between using the OR and AND option when finding academic papers. However, many of the peer reviewed articles were not economic papers. Affirmative action falls beneath many academic areas which made me more difficult for me to pin down the ones that only came from economists.

Ms Morgan directed me to the research tab where she informed on of its several outlets. First, we went through the Databases function where I found EconLit. EconLit, as its name suggests, a database that gives the user economic papers about a certain topic. This database ensures that the peer-reviewed papers of affirmative action are only from economists. Ms Morgan also recommended the research guides tool where we explored the economic tab and found Mr Ng's page. Mr Ng's page had multiple economic databases as well as links to The Economist and other helpful resources. Ms Morgan suggested I reach out the Mr Ng for a follow up since he may have helped other students with this topic or knows of prominent economists that study affirmative action.

With these resources in my toolbelt, I started to find helpful statistics and papers for my forty-five-minute presentation. One of my tasks for the presentation was to find recent statistics for affirmative action. After consulting with Professor Cornelson, she suggested I find the student population racial composition on selective colleges as well as the statistics of women and people of color in STEM. By going back to Mr Ng's page, I went immediately to the Economist and researched the term "affirmative action." After reading several articles, there was a study done by Raj Chetty that the UpShot in The New York Times that was repeatedly quoted. Mr Chetty's article broke down the student population by economic status and each school rankings. This article than lead me to several others where elite colleges were broken down by their racial composition. I used the statistics from Mr Chetty's article in the presentation as well as my final paper.

Lastly, Ms Morgan recommended that my group reserve the group study rooms to rehearse out presentation. Booking the group rooms downstairs, my group was able to replicate our class environment and gave a practice presentation. The rehearsal was extremely useful for

my group as we gave feedback on how to pace ourselves and properly explain the economic papers to someone without any knowledge of affirmative action. After presenting this past Wednesday, Professor Cornelson was thoroughly impressed by our datasets, statistics and well-spoken presentation.

Learning how to properly navigate the library's resources was critical for my presentation and my upcoming final paper. Researching can be daunting when there are multiple pages, each with twenty research papers. It can be difficult to whittle the research down to find the specific requirements for a particular paper. With Ms Morgan's guidance, I was able to not only acquire the skills to find papers for my topic but also learned how to apply those skills to future projects. Ms Morgan showed me how to use the databases to not only find librarians familiar with the topic but also use the specific research databases. I will continue to use the skills Ms Morgan showed me and continue to reach out to the consultations to seek out more guidance.