

**UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT**

Instructor: Holly Sue Hatfield – please call me Holly

Office: Bldg 72 Graduate Student Area

Phone: 801.655.3622 (call/text)

Email: holly.hatfield@utah.edu

Office hours: By appointment (call/text/email)

Econ 5180/6180-001

3 credit hours

Spring 2018

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

T, 2:00PM-5:00PM

Room 215, William Stewart (ST) Bldg

One of my favorite Reddit posts was a person asking, “If someone from the 1950s suddenly appeared today, what would be the most difficult thing to explain to them about life today?” The top-voted answers to the question was, “I possess a device, in my pocket, that is capable of accessing the entirety of information known to man. I use it to look at pictures of cats and get in arguments with strangers.” Meanwhile, 7,000 newborns died *per day* in 2016 (on average),¹ as of 2013 across the world 10.7% of people (767 million) struggle to survive on less than US\$1.90 of income per day,² and in the U.S., the homeless count rose in 2017 for the first time since the Great Recession³ - indeed, in 2017 more than one in eight U.S. citizens lives in poverty (12.7%).⁴ When it comes to economic measures of poverty and inequality, the U.S. generally ranks dead-last among the economically developed nations.

This course is an investigation into poverty and inequality. We will look at global issues, but will focus on the U.S., as it is an interesting case of persistent poverty and growing inequality despite high economic development. Economics is centrally a social science centered on progress – economists hope their work will in some way move humanity towards greater wealth, innovation, productivity and, ultimately, well-being and happiness. Poverty is antithetical to all of these objectives; their relation to inequality is debated. We will review the different measures of poverty and inequality, their historical and demographic trends, policies that have been used to fight poverty and inequality, and the theoretical explanations for poverty, inequality, and their influence on human well-being.

Official Course Description

Economic theories of the causes of poverty and inequality, with a focus on the structure of the U.S.

¹ UNICEF, 2017. *Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2017*. Available online at:

https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Child_Mortality_Report_2017.pdf

² World Bank, 2016. “Poverty: Overview”, WorldBank.org. Available online at:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

³ Gee, Alastair, 2017. “America’s homeless population rises for the first time since the Great Recession”, The Guardian. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/05/america-homeless-population-2017-official-count-crisis>.

⁴ Alston, Philip, 2017. “Statement on Visit to the USA, by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapportuer on extreme poverty and human rights,” United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

Available online at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22533&LangID=E>

economy and recent economic trends. Policies to address these socioeconomic issues are addressed in light of theory.

Pre- or co-requisites

There are no enforced pre- or co-requisites for this course. Students from departments other than economics are encouraged to join the course, as it creates a more interdisciplinary discussion. Any formal economic concept that is introduced will be reviewed. Many students worry about the mathematical rigor of an upper-division economics course; this course requires only basic graphing skills (with a review on reading/creating graphs at the beginning of the course), making it accessible to all students with basic math skills. Non-economic students do as well as those with an economic background in this class.

Texts/Readings

- The course text is: **Schiller** BR, 2008. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination (Upper Saddle River NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall). Copies should be available in the campus bookstore.
- *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair is available in Canvas as a PDF. You can also acquire a hard copy if you'd like (but I didn't order it through the bookstore, so I am not sure if it is available there or not). We will be reading the entire book by the end of the semester.
- All readings that are *not* from the Schiller book can be found on Canvas. *Note: not all students are assigned all readings.* Please refer to the schedule below to determine what readings you need to do for the dates you are signed up to be in the roundtable (grad and undergrad), and the article reading you must present if you are a grad student.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Clearly describe (in a way accessible to average people) the various measures of historical and current manifestations of poverty and inequality both in the U.S. and broadly around the world
- Access the newest data on poverty and inequality measures from the central domestic and global agencies that report on them
- Clearly explain (in a way accessible to average people) and critically evaluate the different economic theoretical explanations for poverty and inequality, as well as the pros/cons of poverty and inequality, including an understanding of the philosophical (ethical/moral/normative) dimension of different theories
- Clearly explain (in a way accessible to average people) and critically evaluate different policies and approaches – both that have been tried, and purely theoretical ones – that may have an influence on poverty and inequality

Graduate/Undergraduate Student Mix

This course includes a mixture of graduate and undergraduate students, historically with mainly economics students, but with some students joining from other various departments. This is a rare opportunity for a great diversity of knowledge and skillsets to be applied to discussions and analyses of a very complex topic. As outlined below, graduate students have slightly different requirements than undergraduate students, both in terms of assignments and readings. It is the goal of the course for students of all levels and backgrounds to be challenged at their current level of education.

Evaluation

This class involves a variety of ways for students to earn points towards their final grades. Each point for assignments correspond to 1% of the student’s final grade – i.e. an activity worth 5 points is also worth 5% of the student’s final grade. This is a high-participation course for students; although attendance will not affect your grade, every class period will feature student-led discussions, student presentations and/or quizzes. It is imperative for each student’s grade that they commit to attending the course. In good news, though, there are no exams. We will not meet during the final exam period unless extenuating circumstances apply.

Undergraduate and graduate students have slightly different requirements, as follows:

Undergraduate student evaluation (5180)

Activity	Description	Point value (each)	Point value (total)
Short papers: 3	Students will write three 3-page reflection papers, following the prompts provided in Canvas, to synthesize and critically evaluate material from readings and class discussions.	10	30
Interviews: 3	Students will choose 3 people in their life (family, friends, colleagues, etc.) to interview about issues related to poverty and inequality, using the question prompts provided in Canvas, then write up a 2-page summary of how the interview went and what they learned.	5	15
Roundtable participation: 2	<p>Each class period, we will have a 45-minute “round table” of 5-7 students having a conversational discussion (I will moderate/participate) about the assigned reading plus one extra short reading to put the issues into context. The rest of the class will watch this conversation. This is not a group presentation – everyone studies the material separately and then we talk about it. The purpose of the round table is for students to get to have a chance to guide the class discussion about the readings in a way that most interests them.</p> <p>Each student in the round table must prepare 3 questions/points they would like to address about the readings and submit them by noon on the day of their roundtable (3 points), then participate in the roundtable (7 points). Roundtable signups will be on the first day of class.</p>	10	20
Country presentation: 1	Students will prepare a 10-minute presentation of the status of poverty and inequality for a country of their choice. Presentation dates will be assigned on the first day of class. Requirements for this presentation are explained in Canvas.	10	10
Quizzes: 5	Throughout the semester, students will take 5 quizzes, on dates as specified in the syllabus.	5	25
TOTAL			100

Graduate student evaluation (6180)

Activity	Description	Point value (each)	Point value (total)
Short papers: 3	Students will write three 3-page reflection papers, following the prompts provided in Canvas, to synthesize and critically evaluate material from readings and class discussions.	8	24
Roundtable participation: 2	<p>Each class period, we will have a 45-minute “round table” of 5-7 students having a conversational discussion (I will moderate/participate) about the assigned reading plus one extra short reading to put the issues into context. The rest of the class will watch this conversation. This is not a group presentation – everyone studies the material separately and then we talk about it. The purpose of the round table is for students to get to have a chance to guide the class discussion about the readings in a way that most interests them.</p> <p>Each student in the round table must prepare 3 questions/points they would like to address about the readings and submit them by noon on the day of their roundtable (3 points), then participate in the roundtable (7 points). Roundtable signups will be on the first day of class.</p>	8	16
Article presentation: 1	Graduate students will prepare a 30 minute presentation of an assigned academic analysis of poverty and inequality. Articles and presentation dates will be assigned on the first day of class.	10	10
Quizzes: 5	Throughout the semester, students will take 5 quizzes, on dates as specified in the syllabus.	5	25
Final paper: 1	Graduate students are required to write a 10-page paper on a topic relevant to the class, due on the last day of class and presented during the last class period. The proposed paper topic must be submitted (by emailing the instructor a ≤1 page description) by March 13th. The paper itself is worth 20 points, and the presentation (15-20 mins) is worth 5. More details about this requirement are available in Canvas.	25	25
TOTAL			100

Grading Scale

A: 94%-100%	B+: 85%-89.9%	B-: 75%-79.9%	C: 65%-69.9%	D+: 55%-59.9%	D-: 45%-49.9%
A-: 90%-93.9%	B: 80%-84.9%	C+: 70%-74.9%	C-: 60%-64.9%	D: 50%-54.9%	E: 0%-44.9%

Class Period Agenda

Each class period will generally follow this timetable:

Time	Activity
2:00-2:40	Student presentations
2:45-3:30	Lecture/review by instructor
3:30-3:40	Break
3:45-4:30	Student roundtable
4:30-5:00	Lecture/review by instructor

Schedule

This schedule is entirely subject to change, depending on how the semester develops. I will notify students in Canvas announcements of changes at least one class period before they take effect.

Check you Canvas announcements and messages regularly!

Date	Topic	What is due?
Jan 9 (Tues)	Introduction	Review of U.S. poverty report and global inequality, per Canvas announcement
Jan 12 (Fri)	Last day to wait list and last day to add without a permission code	
Jan 16 (Tues)	Global poverty -- Undergrad country presentations -- Roundtable context reading: Gill 2017	<u>Read these:</u> Schiller chs. 1 and 4 The Jungle, chapters 1-3
Jan 19 (Fri)	Last day to add, drop (delete), elect CR/NC, or audit classes	
Jan 23 (Tues)	US poverty -- Undergrad country presentations -- Roundtable context reading: Oxfam 2015	<u>Undergrads:</u> Interview #1 due <u>Read these:</u> Schiller ch. 3 The Jungle, chapters 4-6
Jan 30 (Tues)	US inequality -- Undergrad country presentations -- Roundtable context reading: Mishel et al. 2013	<u>Read these:</u> Schiller ch. 2 and Yellen 2014
Feb 6 (Tues)	Wealth and income -- Grad presentation of Saez Zucman 2014 -- Quiz 1 -- Roundtable context reading: Kwak 2017	<u>Remember:</u> Quiz 1 today! <u>Read these:</u> Schiller ch. 5 The Jungle, chapters 7-9
Feb 13 (Tues)	Education's role -- Undergrad country presentations -- Roundtable context reading: Kokkelenberg 2008	<u>All students:</u> Paper #1 due <u>Read these:</u> Schiller ch. 10 and ch. 11 The Jungle, chapters 10-11
Feb 20 (Tues)	Demographic differences -- Grad presentation of Akee et al. 2017 -- Quiz 2 -- Roundtable context reading: Dalaker 2017	<u>Remember:</u> Quiz #2 today! <u>Read these:</u> Schiller chs. 7 and 8 The Jungle, chapters 12-13

Feb 27 (Tues)	Discrimination and mobility -- Grad presentation of Chetty et al 2014 -- Roundtable context reading: White 2015	<u>Undergrads</u> : Interview #2 due <u>Read these</u> : Schiller ch. 9 and ch. 12 The Jungle, chapters 14-15
Mar 2 (Fri)	Last day to withdraw from classes	
Mar 6 (Tues)	Development theory -- Grad presentation of Snower 1998 -- Roundtable context reading: TBD	<u>All students</u> : Short paper #2 due <u>Read these</u> : Dang and Pheng 2015 and Rotman 2014 The Jungle, chapters 16-17
Mar 13 (Tues)	Neoclassical/Keynesian theory -- Grad presentation of Davis and Sanchez-Martinez -- Quiz 3 -- Roundtable context reading: Brook 2017	<u>Remember</u> : Quiz #3 today! <u>Grads</u> : Paper topic due <u>Read these</u> : Cole 2008 The Jungle, chapters 18-21
Mar 18-25	SPRING BREAK – no class	
Mar 27 (Tues)	Institutional/Marxist theory -- Undergrad country presentations -- Roundtable context reading: Schuman 2013	<u>Read these</u> : Royce ch. 8 and Stiglitz 2016
Apr 3 (Tues)	Welfare programs -- Grad presentation of Ryan 2014 -- Roundtable context reading: Black and Sprague 2015	<u>All students</u> : Short paper #3 due <u>Read these</u> : Schiller ch. 13 The Jungle, chapters 22-24
Apr 10 (Tues)	Social insurance -- Grad presentation or undergrad as needed -- Quiz 4 -- Roundtable context reading: Surowiecki 2016	<u>Remember</u> : Quiz #4 today! <u>Read these</u> : Schiller ch. 14 The Jungle, chapters 25-27
Apr 17 (Tues)	Employment/tax policies -- Undergrad country presentations -- Quiz 5 -- Roundtable context reading: Wong 2017	<u>Remember</u> : Quiz #5 is today! <u>Read these</u> : Schiller ch. 15 and Rushe 2017 The Jungle, chapters 28-31
Apr 20 (Fri)	Last day to reverse CR/NC option	
Apr 24 (Tues)	Last class period -- Grad paper presentations	<u>Undergrads</u> : Interview #3 due <u>Grads</u> : Final paper due
May 1 or 2 1:00-3:00PM	Final exam period – this class has no final exam, so unless there are extenuating circumstances we won't meet	

Late submission policy

Papers and interviews submitted late will receive a 1-point deduction per 24 hours late. Quizzes, roundtable participation and presentation dates can be changed with at least 1 week advance notice or under extreme circumstances (i.e. with a doctor's note, major traffic issues), *at the instructor's discretion. Please communicate with me as early as possible if you are unable to meet a deadline!*

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given

to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

Student Names and Personal Pronouns

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, **I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class, on papers, exams, group projects, etc. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes (and update CIS) so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun will be respected.** If you need assistance getting your preferred name on your UIDcard, please visit the LGBT Resource Center Room 409 in the Olpin Union Building, or email bpeacock@sa.utah.edu to schedule a time to drop by. The LGBT Resource Center hours are M-F 8am-5pm, and 8am-6pm on Tuesdays.

Academic Code of Conduct

Students can find the full Student Code for the University of Utah at:

<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>

All student work will be run through a plagiarism software package to detect plagiarism. In the event that student work is plagiarized, the work will only be eligible for half points on the first infraction and a written warning from the instructor. Any plagiarized work from that point forward will receive zero points and the student will be reported for academic discipline. It is *highly* recommended that students run their work through a plagiarism detection software (there are many free options available online) before submitting it. (Most academic writing has higher than 85% original content, the other 15% constituting quoted writing.) It is further recommended that if students are not totally clear on what constitutes plagiarism they contact the instructor or the University Writing Center for clarification.

Wellness Statement

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.

Veterans Center

If you are a student veteran, the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in Room 161 in the

Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

LGBT Resource Center

The LGBT Resource Center offers Gender and Sexuality (formerly Safe Zone) trainings for faculty, staff and instructors at the U. You can also schedule one for your office or Department. The aim of the training is to promote inclusive teaching and foster a respectful, safe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning individuals in our classrooms. For more information about trainings/ workshops, panels and suggesting on how to ask about personal pronouns and preferred student names please go to: <http://lgbt.utah.edu/lgbtrc-programs/trainings.php>. If you plan to indicate that your classroom is a safe zone, please attend one of these trainings.

Learners of English as an Additional Language

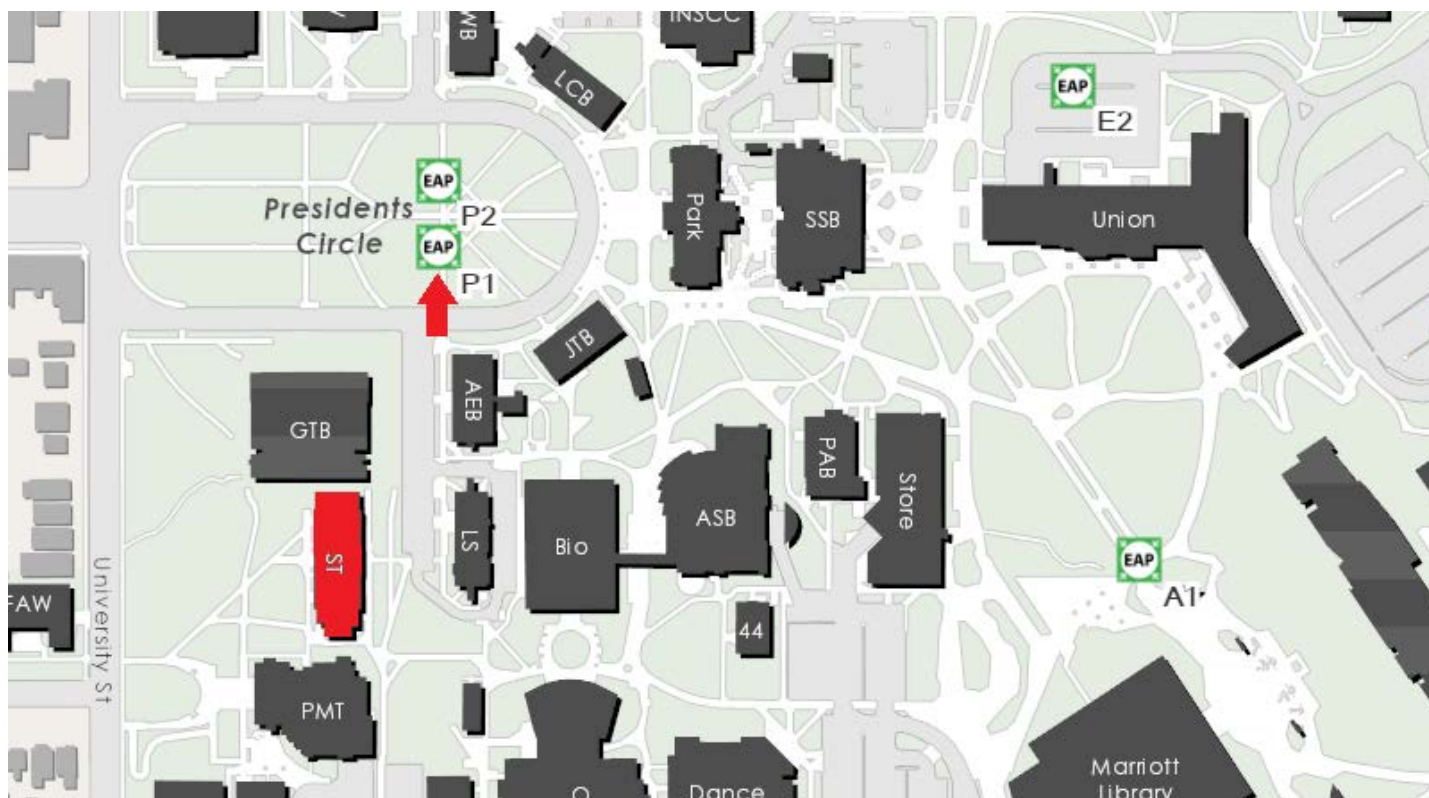
If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include: the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>); the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>). Please let me know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

Readings Bibliography

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CSBS EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN



BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at <http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap>.



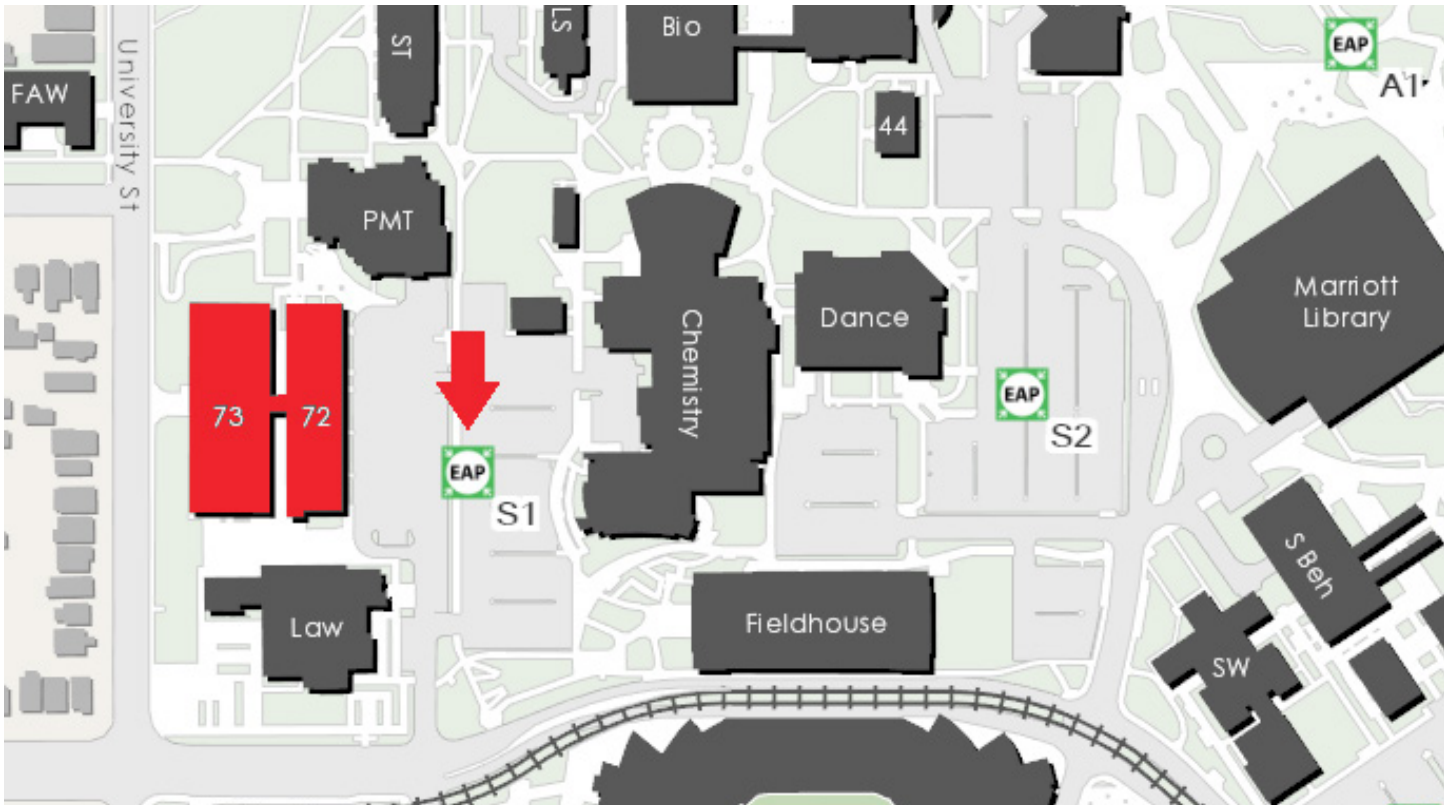
CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There's an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at alert.utah.edu/headsup to access the following resources:

- **Emergency Response Guide:** Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.
- **See Something, Say Something:** Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus. If you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!

Safety Escorts: For students who are on campus at night or past business hours and would like an escort to your car, please call **801-585-2677**. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.

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