

Econ 191: The Economics Behind Our Lives**01 Tuesday 1:00-1:50pm****02 Tuesday 2:30-3:20pm****03 Thursday 1:00-1:50pm****04 Thursday 2:30-3:20pm****Fall 2016 @ UMass Amherst****Dickinson Room 112****Instructor: Anastasia Wilson****Email: anastasw@econs.umass.edu****Office Hours: By Appointment in Machmer 403****Mailbox: Thompson Hall, 8th Floor Computer Lab****Syllabus & Course Outline
Last Updated September 5, 2016****Course Description & Objectives**

Econ 191 is a one-credit First Year Seminar course through the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences for new economics majors. This course is designed to help students with a smooth transition to attending college in the classroom and on campus, and to inform you about the academic field of economics here at UMass-Amherst.

The course intends to share tools for student success in the classroom, on campus, and beyond the university. Our lectures, assignments, and class meetings will be designed to help you in transitioning to college life, preparing for academic success, planning academic goals, understanding economics as a major, getting to know campus and community resources, thinking about time management and self-care, and many other topics.

Alongside these materials, we will study “real world” examples of how economic theory and analysis relates to our everyday lives and lived experiences. Economics can be thought of broadly as the study of how society, groups, and individuals deal with the issues of allocating, provisioning, and producing resources- from material goods, to time, to knowledge, and so on. In a sense, most of our existence as social beings relates somehow to these economic questions and conflicts. In recent years, economic topics have become hot button issues in the news and political debates. Issues of inequality (“We are the 99%!”), financialization (remember Occupy Wall Street?), minimum wage (The Fight for \$15!), trade and globalization (heard of the Trans-Pacific Partnership?), racial inequality (Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives), economic crises (The Collapse of 2008 and Great Recession), the environment (Is capitalism at the root of climate change?), and many more topics are at the forefront of the most important struggles of our time.

The goal is for this course to be a resource for you in successfully and happily transitioning to college, and to be introduced (and hopefully excited for) the economics major. The classroom will be a participatory space for you to share insights and ask questions about college, life at UMass, learning in general, and the field of economics.

Texts and Materials

All readings and materials will be either posted online, emailed, or provided by the instructor. No need to purchase a textbook, but some of our readings may encourage you to purchase some popular books in economics such as Levitt & Dubner's *Freakonomics*, Piketty's *The Economics of Inequality*, Heilbroner's *The Worldly Philosophers*, and others works from which we'll read short excerpts.

Moodle

Course materials, including readings, some assignments, and the syllabus, will be posted on Moodle: <http://moodle.umass.edu>. The Moodle page and your email will be our main channels of communication beyond the classroom, so please check frequently.

Class Attendance

Attendance for this seminar is required, and attendance will be taken for each meeting. Attendance and participation in the course will count towards your grade.

Class Participation

An important part of learning is the act of learning from one's peers. This is done through group discussion both as a class and in small breakout groups. For that reason, participation in the seminar is required and counted towards your grade in the course. While participation may be easier for some than others, the goal is to build an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel and are welcome to discuss, ask questions, share thoughts, and so on. Online participation will also be an important component of our course, with many homework assignments taking place on Moodle.

Note on Academic Honesty

Students must comply with the university's academic honesty policy, available here: <http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>. Plagiarism should always be avoided, and in class we will discuss how avoid plagiarism in academic work.

Classroom Etiquette and Other Expectations

We'll try to integrate as much discussion as possible into our seminar. *Your participation is crucial to making this work*, as is your ability to listen and respect your peers in that conversation. It's important to build an inclusive and welcoming discussion environment in our classroom, and be aware that this is in fact a goal of our course. Some students prefer to talk more often than others, but you should try to be as self aware as possible of whether or not you've taken too much or too little of the classroom discussion space. In class, we'll use different methods to structure our discussion and make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate. As we cover some areas that may be "hot topics" for debate, it is also crucial that we discuss in a respectful manner, avoid profanity and slurs (unless quoting from a reading), and try to use language in a way that's accessible to

everyone in the classroom.

Etiquette is important not just in person, but also online. Remember when sending emails to any instructors, professors, TAs, and other students, that they'll need time to read and respond, especially during the busy parts of the semester. Remember to always be courteous and professional, and to avoid ambiguity. Similarly, on Moodle, you will want to be clear, concise, and respectful in emails and discussion board posts.

Grading

This is a 1-credit seminar that is letter graded, so how well you do in this class will impact your GPA. For final grades, we'll follow a standard letter grading scheme and grades will be determined by the following:

In-Class Assignments 40%
Homework Assignments 40%
Attendance & Participation 20%

Course Schedule

Below is our tentative schedule of topics, readings, and deliverables for the course. With your input, these may be subject to change. You'll be notified and updated materials will be available on Moodle.

Week 1 ~~~ September 6 // 8

Topic: Welcome & Introductions

In-Class: Introductions Exercise & What Do We Want From the FYS? Discussion and Activity

Homework: Syllabus Assignment for Important Dates, Contacts, and Office Hours

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

"It's On The Syllabus" Inside Higher Ed blog post

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/10/18/t-shirt-many-professors-would-enjoy-wearing>

Week 2 ~~~~ September 13 // 15

Topic: The Syllabus & What Is Economics?: An Intro to the "Dismal Science"

In-Class: Report Back on The Syllabus Exercise, Breakout Group Discussion & Activity of What is Economics

Homework: What is Economics Discussion Assignment on Moodle

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

Introduction from Heilbroner's *The Worldly Philosophers* to be posted on Moodle

Read Undergraduate requirements

<http://www.umass.edu/economics/undergraduate/academics/major>

Week 3 ~~~ September 20 // 22

Topic: What is Economics & A Brief History of Economic Thought, and How to Complete the Economics Major

In-Class: Watch Ha-Joon Chang on “What Is Economics?”

<https://www.socialeurope.eu/2014/05/economics/>, Discussion of Chang’s lecture and Heilbroner, Understanding Degree Requirements Activity and Exercise

Homework: Assignment on Requirements and Future Coursework Ideas Planning, Bring Two RSO’s of Interest to Share

Reading/Materials for Next Class: RSO Websites <https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/get-involved/sai>

Reading: Robert Reich’s 7 Reasons to Raise the Minimum Wage to \$15:

<http://www.alternet.org/economy/robert-reich-7-reasons-why-minimum-wage-should-be-raised-15-hour>

Week 4 ~~~ September 27 // 29

Topic: Activism & Student Groups at UMass, Minimum Wage Debates

In-Class: Check Back in on Future Coursework Activity, Activism and Student Groups Exercise, Minimum Wage Debate Discussion

Watch Robert Reich: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOqtI53V3JI>

Homework: Time Management Discussion Post

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

http://turnitin.com/assets/en_us/media/plagiarism-spectrum/

Freakonomics excerpt posted on Moodle

Week 5 ~~~ October 4 // 6

Topic: Writing for a Critical Consciousness & Time Management

In Class: Discussion of *Freakonomics*, Intro to Strunk & White’s *Elements of Style*, sand the Writing Center; Brainstorm Strategies of Time Management

Homework: Watch *How Class Works* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euH3pAuLuko>

Homework: Writing Challenges Reflection Assignment

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/04/24/inside-the-offbeat-economics-department-that-debunked-reinhart-rogooff/>

Week 6 ~~~ October 11 // 13

Monday Schedule October 11 // In-Class Meeting Cancelled Thursday

Week 7 ~~~ October 18 // 20

Topic: Communism vs. Capitalism & The UMass Economics Department

In-Class: Guest visit from academic advisor Lori Sadler; Discussion of Econ Department History; Revisit Writing Reflections & Goal Setting Exercise

Homework: Goal Setting Assignment

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

SMART Goal Setting handout posted on Moodle

<http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/15/college-students-the-new-cash-cows/>

<http://www.jwj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Kicking-Wall-Street-Off-Campus.pdf>

Week 8 ~~~ October 25 // 27

Topic: Student Debt and Financialization & SMART Goals for College and Your Career

In-Class: Financialization & Debt Discussion, Writing a CV/Resume Exercise, Goal Setting Discussion and Activity

Homework: Complete Resume/CV Exercise

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Handout on Effective Studying posted on Moodle

Week 9 ~~~ November 1 // 3

Topic: The Mid-Term Crunch, Study Skills, & Behavioral Economics

In-Class: Behavioral Economics Discussion and Activity, Study Skills Discussion and Report Back

Predictably Irrational with Dan Ariely

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9X68dm92HVI>

Homework: Study Schedule Worksheet Assignment

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Nancy Folbre on The Golden Age of Human Capital

<http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/10/the-once-but-no-longer-golden-age-of-human-capital/>

Week 10 ~~~ November 8 // 10

Topic: What is College For? Labor Economics & Career Planning

In-Class: Discussion of College and Labor Economics, Career Services, Pre-Registration “Workshop” and Worksheet (+ Tips for Isenberg Transfer)

Homework: Long Term Goal Setting Worksheet Assignment

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Healthy Living Powerpoint on Moodle

Week 11 ~~~ November 15 & 17

Topic: Taking Care: Wellness and Self-Care in the College Environment

In-Class: Self-Care in College Discussion and Brainstorm

Homework: Reflection on Why College, UMass, & Economics to be peer reviewed

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Read Library Resources for Writing and Research

<http://www.library.umass.edu/services/writing-and-publication/>

<http://www.library.umass.edu/services/research/>

~~~~~Thanksgiving Break~~~~~

Week 12 ~~~ November 29 // December 1

Topic: Writing As A Collaborative Process

In-Class: Peer Review Group Exercise and How to Generate a Research Question

Homework: Revise Peer Review Assignment

Reading/Materials for Next Class: SBS Academic Advising Resources

<https://www.umass.edu/sbs/sbs-advising-resource-center>

Week 13 ~~~ December 6 // 8

Topic: Making Progress and Planning Ahead: Checking In and Checking Out

In-Class: What progress did we make? Discussion and Brainstorm

Homework: Reflection Assignment

Week 14 ~~~ December 18 & Classes End

Topic: Wrapping Up Our First Year Seminar