

Econ 486: Senior Seminar

Rhodes College, Spring 2018

Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Erin Kaplan
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Office: 221 Buckman Hall
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

This course is the capstone of your economics degree, and you will draw on skills that you have acquired throughout your major coursework. During the course of the semester you will develop an original contribution to the existing body of economic knowledge.

Student Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course students should be able to

- Apply knowledge of economic theory to specific empirical questions.
- Develop original research questions, and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of particular lines of inquiry.
- Effectively communicate economic ideas in both written papers and oral presentations.

Course Materials:

There is no textbook for the course, because the nature of your learning is self directed. However, the following resources are required.

- “*Economical Writing*” by Dierdre McCloskey.
Available on Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com/Economical-Writing-Deirdre-McCloskey/dp/1577660633>.
- STATA
STATA is available in the computer labs. Let me know if you wish to purchase your own copy, so that you can work on your own computer. I can help you decide which version is appropriate for your project, and give you a discount code.
<http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/course-pricing/>.

Course Policies

Attendance: Success in this class requires regular attendance, preparation, and willingness to ask questions and engage in discussion. Students with recurring extracurricular commitments (athletics, mock trial, etc...) should speak with me in advance about their anticipated absence(s).

Late Work: Deadlines for assignments in this course are firm. I will deduct 1 percentage point (up to 10) for every five minutes past the deadline that your assignment is late, and 10 percentage points per day thereafter. Keep in mind that I will be able to see when you began assignments as well as your progress, so be sure to start early.

Office Hours: Since we will not meet as a class for most of the scheduled meetings, students are expected to attend office hours. I will hold office hours in the computer lab to help with programming, and I am available to meet during the regularly scheduled course time on days that we do not meet as a class. If you are struggling, it is vital that you should reach out to me for help.

Email: In general, email is the best way to get in contact with me. However, if you send me an email within 24 hours of a deadline, don't count on a response before the deadline.

Honor Code: Academic misconduct includes the following examples as well as any other similar conduct which is aimed at falsely representing a student's academic performance: cheating, plagiarizing, using unauthorized aids on an exam, falsifying records, or assisting another individual in any of the above. All instances of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Council.

Mutual Respect: Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints, and I encourage respectful disagreement and civilized debate. For this reason, it is vital that we create an environment of mutual respect. Remember that each of us has a unique set of experiences and opinions, and that this diversity is valuable both inside and outside of the classroom.

Use of Cell Phones: The use of cell phones during class is a disrespectful distraction to your instructor and other classmates. Please turn off your cell phone while you are in class. In emergency situations, please discuss limited use of cell phone with me prior to the class during which you would like to use your cell phone.

Disability Services: If you have a disability, please contact me as well as the Office of Student Disability Services on the 4th floor of Burrow Student Center (901-843-3885) as early as possible in the term, to verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Course Grades

Independent Research Project

Over the course of the semester you will complete an original research project on a topic of your choosing. The end product will be a concisely written 15-20 page paper. In addition, there will be a several deadlines throughout the term to make sure you are on track to complete the project successfully and give me an opportunity to offer my comments. Below is a breakdown of how each assignment will factor into your final grade.

| Written Assignments (70%) | Presentations (20%) | Participation (10%) |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Idea Paper (5) | Presentation 1 (10) | Class Participation (5) |
| Paper Proposal (10) | Final Presentation (10) | Progress Meetings (5) |
| Reaction to Economic Writing (5) | | |
| Annotated Bibliography (10) | | |
| Draft 1 (20) | | |
| Final Draft (20) | | |

All written assignments are due at 5pm on the due date. Late work will be marked 10 percentage points lower per day.

Letter Grades:

Your final grade will be calculated as described above, and corresponding letter grades will be assigned based on the traditional cutoffs listed below. Please see me in office hours if you have any questions or concerns about your grade.

| | |
|----|--------------|
| A | 93.0 – 100% |
| A- | 90.0 – 92.9% |
| B+ | 87.0 – 89.9% |
| B | 83.0 – 86.9% |
| B- | 80.0 – 82.9% |
| C+ | 77.0 – 79.9% |
| C | 73.0 – 76.9% |
| C- | 70.0 – 72.9% |
| D+ | 67.0 – 69.9% |
| D | 63.0 – 66.9% |
| D- | 60.0 – 62.9% |
| F | 0 – 59.9% |

Tentative Schedule

| Week | Monday | | Wednesday | | Friday | | Other Meetings | Due Dates |
|------|--------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | | | 10-Jan | Class Meeting | 12-Jan | | | |
| 2 | 15-Jan | <i>No Class: MLK Day</i> | 17-Jan | Class Meeting | 19-Jan | | | Jan 17: Idea Paper |
| 3 | 22-Jan | Lab Meeting | 24-Jan | Lab Meeting | 26-Jan | Lab Meeting | Progress Meetings | |
| 4 | 29-Jan | Lab Meeting | 31-Jan | Lab Meeting | 2-Feb | Lab Meeting | | Jan 29: Proposal |
| 5 | 5-Feb | | 7-Feb | | 9-Feb | | Progress Meetings | Feb 5: STATA Exercise |
| 6 | 12-Feb | | 14-Feb | Class Meeting | 16-Feb | | | Feb 16: Book Reaction |
| 7 | 19-Feb | | 21-Feb | | 23-Feb | | | |
| 8 | 26-Feb | Presentations | 28-Feb | Presentations | 2-Mar | Presentations | | Mar 2: Bibliography |
| 9 | 5-Mar | <i>No Class: Spring Break</i> | 7-Mar | <i>No Class: Spring</i> | 9-Mar | <i>No Class: Spring</i> | | |
| 10 | 12-Mar | | 14-Mar | | 16-Mar | | Office Hours in Lab | |
| 11 | 19-Mar | | 21-Mar | | 23-Mar | | Progress Meetings | |
| 12 | 26-Mar | | 28-Mar | | 30-Mar | <i>No Class: Easter</i> | Office Hours in Lab | Mar 28: Draft 1 Due |
| 13 | 2-Apr | | 4-Apr | | 6-Apr | | Office Hours in Lab | |
| 14 | 9-Apr | | 11-Apr | | 13-Apr | | Progress Meetings | |
| 15 | 16-Apr | | 18-Apr | Presentations | 20-Apr | Presentations | | |
| 16 | 23-Apr | Presentations | 25-Apr | Presentations | 27-Apr | URCAS | | |
| 17 | 30-Apr | <i>No Class: Finals Week</i> | 2-May | <i>No Class: Finals Week</i> | 4-May | <i>No Class: Finals Week</i> | | April 30: Final Draft |