

**Economics 197 - Economic Rhetoric:  
Using Economic Theory & Empirical Evidence in Arguing Policy  
Summer Session II 2014**

Class Hours: MW 1:00 to 4:30 PM  
Location: Physical Science 130

Meeting Dates: 7/28 - 8/27  
Class Website: eCommons

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Hours: office hours by appointment  
(and available by email)

Hours: Mon 10 to 12 noon, beginning 8/4  
(or by appointment)

***From the UCSC Course Catalog***

"Economics students are expected to learn to effectively communicate economic theory and evidence relating to economic policy to audiences that do not have economics degrees. The skills to be learned are both written and oral communication. Students learn to present convincing policy arguments in position papers, executive summaries, and in oral presentation that may include charts and other means of communication. Students must have satisfied the Entry-Level Writing and Composition requirement, as well as either 100A, 100M, 100B, 100N, or 113, before enrolling."

Students of economics must satisfy the major's upper-division Disciplinary Communication (DC) requirement. *Economics 197* satisfies this requirement for Economics majors. It is intended "to familiarize you with the demand and rewards of working and writing within the economic academic community."

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***The Course Generally***

The class invites you to both challenge ideas and assumptions about "real world" issues and to improve your ability to communicate your understandings clearly and effectively. As you may already have experienced when speaking about your studies with family, friends, or acquaintances, it is not always easy to communicate 'things-economic' with people who neither have nor seek a degree in the field. The target audience for your work in this class is weighted more heavily toward people who are NOT trained economists. (This includes your instructor!) *Economics 197* asks that you communicate economic perspectives – not watered down, over-simplified perspectives, but your most sophisticated economic understandings - with people unfamiliar with the specialized language and shorthand often taken for granted from within an academic discipline. As you struggle to 'translate' economics into more common parlance, your reading, thinking, speaking, writing and understandings will deepen.

Goals:

- Read, think, speak, and write with care and clarity.
- Write a clear, concise, finished piece of work.
- Prepare and deliver oral presentations effectively .
- Support opinions with compelling data and visual aids.

***REQUIRED Text***

SUPERFreakonomics, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner. (My paperback edition was printed in 2011 by HarperCollins. ISBN 978-0-06-088958-6. There are several versions out there. Use whichever

one you find. Some have a sixteen page color illustration spread. If yours does not, do not worry, we will make it work.) THIS IS A REQUIRED TEXT.

A word about the book: I have not chosen it because it is the be all and end all of economic writing. It does, however, offer an interesting read at times, and it provides much to work with. We will also be reading from a variety of other sources, some written by academics, some by journalists, policy makers, and 'regular citizens.'

**Supporting Texts** that may be useful (...but PLEASE, do NOT rush out to purchase them).

1. Economical Writing, Diedre N. McCloskey, 2nd edition.
2. The Elements of Style, William Strunk and E.B. White, 4th edition.
3. On Writing Well, William Zinsser, the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition was released in 2006.

Each of these offers insight into writing more effectively. McCloskey is more focused on Economics; Strunk & White and Zinsser speak more generally. All three are excellent.

### **Other REQUIRED Materials**

Come to class with a writing implement and a notebook dedicated to the notes you will take and the writing you will do for this class. I love gadgets of all sorts, but I recommend pen/pencil and paper for this. I am certainly not opposed to you doing your work on a computer, tablet, etc., BUT I will insist that you STAY OFFLINE while we are in class.

### **Written Work, Attendance, and Participation**

You need to arrive to class having read assigned materials and ready to participate. During class, we will discuss contemporary economic and business issues as they appear in the course text, and in additional readings that we will make available. Although I have tried to be sensitive to the realities of the calendar - your reading and writing load will not be enormous - this is a summer class, racing by in **five** weeks, and so it might seem otherwise. You should expect to write regularly, with at least one piece of work due each week. You will need to stay on top of things, or you will find yourself in that place no student wants to be.

Getting better at thinking, writing, and speaking requires thinking, writing and speaking! We will spend time together writing and reading our writing in response to assigned reading, our discussions, and other material. If you have not spent time reading, writing, and thinking with others, you will be quite pleasantly surprised at how rich an experience this can be.

All of this means that you need to be in class and engaged in the process. You will be required to write and read some of your writing aloud. Some people are very comfortable thinking aloud in groups. Others feel quite the opposite. If you are more the latter than the former, this will be an opportunity to 'get over' some of your reticence, and dip your toes in the participation waters in a setting that I hope will feel supportive and comfortable. (Incidentally, regardless of whether you think of yourself as bold or reticent, I recommend that you read Susan Cain's, Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking (Crown, 2012). This is not a text for this class. If you simply do not have the time or inclination, you might check out her [TED Talk](#).)

Tardiness, inattention and failure to prepare for class will be interpreted as a lack of respect for the class and your fellow students.

### **Grades and Grading Guidelines**

Final grades in *Economics 197* reward both effort and results, but they are certainly weighted more toward results. We will try to account for all aspects of your work over the session — the conceptual work of reading, thinking, and writing; the cooperative work of participating in an intellectual community; the procedural work of completing work, meeting deadlines, and attending class. You must turn in all the assignments and contribute regularly in class. Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class for some pressing reason – illness, family emergency, etc. – please let me know as far in advance as possible. Failure to attend class regularly can impact your grade significantly.

- Participation (total 30 points; 3 points possible/class x 10 classes)  
In addition to contributions you make to class discussions, the writing/reading you do in class will be considered part of your participation. The quality of what you contribute will determine the strength of your participation grade.
- Assignments (total 70 points)
  - Policy Memo #1; 2 to 3 pages (5 points)
  - Policy Memo or Response Paper #2; 2 to 3 pages (10 points)
  - Research/ Position Paper
    - #3 Topic Proposal and Annotated Bibliography; five sources, one paragraph each (5 points)
    - #4 Detailed Outline; 2 to 3 pages (10 points)
    - #5 Rough Draft; 4 to 6 pages (10 points)
    - #6 Final Paper with references; 6 to 8 pages (20 points)
    - #7 Paper Presentation; 8-10 minutes; should include appropriate media (10 points)

A word about points and grades Focusing on your grades and points can impede just about everything education ought to be: a spirited and curiosity-driven romp, where we all take risks, and then make (and correct) more and more complex mistakes. Then again, they be an effective incentive to take that romp. Although you may read this as an ambiguous approach to your assessments, I would prefer you see it as an invitation to recognize this ‘tension’ inherent in the situation. On the one hand, these guidelines are just that, ‘guidelines.’ If we discover ways for our assessments to make more sense, we will surely implement them (and never to your detriment). On the other, do not expect ‘something for nothing.’ Sustained, spirited, high quality work (and rework) will earn stronger grades than lackluster work and ‘ho hum’ effort.

Finally, you should know that we recognize that we are not infallible. If you think we have made an error assessing your work, please come speak about it.

### **General Paper Formatting and Guidelines**

- Please use 12-point font and one-inch margins. Period! And please don’t get fancy with your fonts. (Times, New Roman, Garamond, Arial, Avenir... please nothing flowery or large here.)
- Documents must be turned in as Microsoft Word documents (or documents that can be opened using Word) via your eCommons DropBox folder.
- Papers are graded using the “COMMENTS” and “TRACK CHANGES” functions in Word, so that edits appear in digital ‘ink,’ when edited files are viewed in Word.
- What if you do not have Microsoft Word? First of all there are computers in the library with WORD loaded and available for your use. You can also try OPEN OFFICE, an open source business/productivity program that allows you to read and create WORD-compatible documents. If these two options fail (and they shouldn’t) come speak to me and we try to will figure out an alternative that does.

- Papers should be saved with filenames in the following format: **last name first name assign #\_\_**. Files will be returned with the same filename and the initials of the grader (instructor or TA) appended: **last name first name assign #\_\_ES or DB**).
- Your submissions must be on time; they must be submitted by the beginning of class on the assignment due date. Late papers will negatively affect your final grade. In the event of illness and/or other family or personal circumstances, please contact me before the due date.

### ***Research/Policy Paper and Presentation Guidelines (assignments #3 through #7 above)***

You are required to write an 1800 to 2400-word (6 to 8 pages) research/position paper in which you must take and defend a position. You may also opt to illuminate an area of study relevant to the field of economics. In either case, you must take and defend a position with clear evidence and sound argument.

This will require a paper proposal with annotated bibliography, an outline, a rough draft, and a final paper. Your TA and I can help you identify topics and resources for your papers. As with all your writing, it is fine to ask others to think with you, or to read and comment on your work. However when it comes time to put “pen to paper,” the work must be your own, with appropriate citation of source material. This is an opportunity to write a paper that you can use as a writing sample when applying for whatever might come next – school, employment, etc. We will spend some time in classes teaching these required academic skills.

During the last three class periods, you will each have roughly 10 minutes to present your results using PowerPoint, Prezi, or other appropriate presentation material and to answer questions. We encourage you to incorporate Web resources and other visual aids to enliven your presentation.

***Academic Integrity*** (from the UCSC Writing Program): By enrolling in the university, students automatically agree to abide by its policies, including those on academic misconduct. Academic integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide your conduct and decisions as members of the UCSC community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and are very serious academic offenses. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must cite your sources to avoid plagiarism. This requires more than citing direct quotations or paraphrasing. There is absolutely nothing wrong with using ideas that come from others; academic work is an additive process. We all rely on the work of others to advance our collective knowledge. Simply be sure to give credit where it is due. Failure to do so is a serious breach of academic integrity.

It may not always be easy to recognize whether you are legitimately citing the work of others or whether you have “crossed the line” into plagiarism. To become acquainted with what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, make an effort to familiarize yourself with and follow citation practices. (see <http://library.ucsc.edu/library-research-resources>) and the university’s Rules of Conduct regarding student conduct and discipline: <http://deanofstudents.ucsc.edu/pdf/student-handbook.pdf> beginning on page 45).

You should know that we take this very seriously. Experience tells us that sometimes things “seem too good to be true.” And sometimes when they seem that way, they are. We will spot check papers using a variety of search engines in order to verify authorship. We are more than willing to give strong grades to everyone in class. We also report academic dishonesty if it appears.

***Office hours***

We encourage you to take advantage of office hours to discuss your work or speak about things related to class. If you are unable to meet during regularly scheduled hours, please contact one of us to set up an alternative time.

***Students with Disabilities***

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of the Summer Session. Contact DRC by phone at [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089) or by email at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu) for more information.