

Econ 281 Syllabus, Fall 2011

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Professor Jacobsen's office hours for 281 are: Thursdays from 4-5 in ECON 223

Discussion section Time and Location: Mondays 4:00 – 5:00pm in IGPP 4301

Discussion sessions will apply the ideas from the lectures to marine biodiversity and global change. The session will be driven by student discussion of assigned materials listed below – about 30 pages per week. Readings with ** beside them are assigned; the others provide more depth or a different perspective on the topic.

Each week, one or two “presenters” will be assigned to lead a discussion of the main ideas in the assigned readings, and a “discussant” will be assigned to raise a handful of critical points about the paper, its methods or conclusions. However, “presenter” and “discussant” are really misnomers. It is the job of the presenters to lead and drive discussion – *not* give a stock presentation – and it is the job of the discussant to raise points that the presenters may be missing. Power Point presentations will not be allowed without good reason and advance notice.

The presenters and the discussant may work together to stake out opposing viewpoints or otherwise creatively provoke discussion, but they need not do so. The presenters should outline (or drive the conversation to outline) how specific course topics are illustrated by the reading, the main research questions confronted in the reading, the methods used to answer these questions (e.g., data, theory, other means of inquiry), and the main conclusions. The discussant should highlight (or provoke others to highlight) the questions raised but left unanswered by the reading (or the presenters), and the reading’s main flaws. Everyone should come to class prepared to participate, however; the presenters and discussants are merely provocateurs. During the first class we will allocate duties for the following weeks.

We will spend the last 15 minutes of each session going over an exam type question or homework problem. I will give hints, but you will have to walk me through the problem until we agree on an answer. This will be a group exercise, not the responsibility of the presenters or discussants. You may choose the problems we discuss, but please e-mail your requests a few days early so I have a chance to think about them. If there are lots of questions, I will be available for an hour or so after the session to continue discussing problems.

Grading will be as follows: quiz (10%), midterm exam (30%), final (30%) and a 10-page (double-spaced, not including graphics or references) paper (30%). The paper is due December 5th by email to both Stephie and Mark. A portion of the paper can be preliminary work and background information on your Capstone project, but at least half of the paper must develop a well-reasoned economic argument about the issue you are discussing. One option for the paper is to identify a problem, discuss previous literature on the issue, propose a research question, methodology, and/or data (existing or yet-to-be gathered by you) to address the problem, and discuss how topics from this course are relevant. In other words, your paper may be a modified Capstone proposal that focuses on aspects of economics that are important for your topic. Alternatively, you may choose a course topic that interests you, and explicate that topic using further examples from the literature. You may use the papers listed below as a jumping-off point. Either way, your paper must convey that you understand the basic concepts of resource management, optimization, etc., that are covered in this course. During our second to last meeting we will not discuss new readings or material, but instead take that opportunity to discuss paper topics and/or go over exam-type problems.