

Econ 281 Syllabus – Fall 2013

Professor Mark Jacobsen's office hours for 281: Tuesdays 12 noon – 1 PM (Economics 223)

TA: Brigitte Roth Tran office hours: Thursdays 11 AM – noon, Sequoyah Hall 237

Discussion Time and Location: Tuesdays 11 AM – noon, Economics Building, room 300

Goal

Develop tools to better understand key economic issues in your Capstone projects and in your careers more generally.

Discussion Section

In addition to attending the Econ 131 course lectures, we will hold weekly discussion sections in which we will apply lecture concepts to marine biodiversity and global change.

Each week we will spend approximately 15-20 minutes discussing each of the assigned readings. These reading discussions will be led by students as assigned at the start of the quarter. However, every week all students are expected to arrive having read and being prepared to discuss the required readings – marked with ** on the list at the end of this syllabus – for a total of about 30 pages per week. The assigned discussion leader should summarize the main ideas of the paper, raise a handful of critical points about the paper, connect the paper to the material discussed in class, and generate two or three questions for discussion.

We will spend the remaining 15-20 minutes in 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 presenter. 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.

Exams

Everyone will take the first midterm (30 minutes) together with the larger undergraduate class. The second midterm will be for the full 75 minutes and arranged in a separate room. Graduate (281) students will also take a separate, shorter final in order for you to focus more on the papers (see below). Participation in the discussion section will count for 15% of your grade. Your participation score will be based on both your performance as a discussion leader and a discussion participant.

Paper

You are assigned an 8-page (double-spaced, not including graphics or references) paper (40% of the grade). The paper is due December 10th by email to both Brigitte and Mark and a hard copy to Brigitte. 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 any 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, and economic tradeoffs 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.

Grading

Course Component	Percent of Grade
Midterm I – 30 minutes, with larger undergraduate class	7%
Midterm II – 75 minutes	20%
(Shortened) final exam – 60 minutes	18%
Participation in section	15%
Paper	40%

Note: For students who wish to focus more on the paper there will be an option to increase the grading weight from 40 to 55% (reducing the importance of the exams), but we will expect a stronger paper. We'll remind you of this after midterms are complete.

Please feel free to give me feedback during and after the quarter to make sure we are going in that direction, and feel free to approach me with questions, comments, concerns, ideas, etc.