
ECON 281 SYLLABUS – FALL 2014

Professor: Mark Jacobsen: office hours for 281 on Tuesdays 3:30-4:30 (Economics 227)

TA: Brigitte Roth Tran: office hours on Thursdays 2:30-3:30, Sequoyah Hall 237,
brothtran@ucsd.edu

Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday 5:00-6:20PM

Discussion: Thursdays 3:30 PM – 4:30 PM, Economics Building, room 300

SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain the process of implementing a cost-benefit analysis and describe the potential uses and shortcomings of cost benefit analyses
- Understand how behavioral responses affect outcomes of various policies
- Critically assess the quality of economic arguments and results related to various environmental issues
- Analyze in depth the economic issues relevant to an environmental topic of your choosing
- Solve applied problems relating to the theory of environmental economics

FORMAT AND PROCEDURES

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

During a typical week we will spend our time discussing three assigned readings. These 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. 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 lively discussion. Student participation in these discussions will be graded along with presentation of assigned readings.

We will also dedicate two entire sessions to reviewing exam-type questions and homework problems. To the extent that there are particular topics or problems you would like to cover during these sessions, please email your requests by Tuesday of the same week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams

There will be two midterm exams and a final. The first and second midterms will be 60- and 75-minute exams, respectively. They will cover material from lecture. There will also be a final exam, with questions related to the readings discussed in Econ 281 section as well as material covered in lecture.

Readings

Participation in the discussion sections focused on readings will count for 15% of your grade. Each student will present an assigned reading to the rest of the class during a discussion section. During the presentation, you should summarize the key questions, methodologies, and conclusions of the reading, provide a thoughtful critique of the material, and pose questions designed to generate lively discussion. The presentation plus discussion should run for a total of approximately 15 minutes.

Your participation score will be based on both your performance as a discussion leader and as a discussion participant. The highest grades will go to students who show through their comments that they are keeping up with the readings and thinking critically about the material and whose presentations of their assigned readings show a good grasp of the material and a thorough level of preparation.

Paper

You are assigned an 8-page (double-spaced, not including graphics or references) paper, which will count for 40% of the grade. You are required to submit a one-paragraph proposal for the paper, due November 25. The final draft of the paper is due December 12th 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.

GRADING PROCEDURES

Course Component	Percent of Grade
Midterm I – Tuesday, October 28	10%
Midterm II – Thursday, November 20	15%
Final exam – 60 minutes	20%
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). However, a greater weight on the paper means a stronger paper will be required to receive the same grade (on the paper portion). We'll remind you of this after midterms are complete.