

Welcome to ECON 309
Economic Problems and Public Policies
Spring 2013—Section 001 – 3 Credit Hours

I. Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jason Dunick
Office: Enterprise 346
Office Phone: 993-1141
Email: jdunick@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Monday – Thursday: 1:00 - 3:00pm or by appt.

II. Course Overview

Catalog Description: Economic problems in light of current and proposed public policies. Topics include environmental issues, international trade policies, and regulatory issues and their historical roots.

Learning Outcomes: This course is a **synthesis course** and an **upper-division elective** within economics.

As a **synthesis course**, this course strives to help students:

- **Communicate effectively** in both oral and written forms.
- **Connect issues** in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns using perspectives outside of the discipline of economics.
- Apply **critical thinking skills** to evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources

As an **upper-division elective** in the discipline of economics, this course strives to help students:

- **Develop an economic imagination**, learning how to create and answer research questions about economic problems and public policy responses
- **Understand and apply relevant economic concepts and theories** that are used to frame research questions and policy debates.
- **Compare and contrast economic arguments** made in peer-reviewed journals and mainstream media sources by breaking down arguments and identifying the relevant concepts and theories from economics.

All learning outcomes will be demonstrated through written assignments, oral presentations, exams, and classroom participation.

Readings & Textbooks: Assigned readings will be posted on Blackboard (<http://mymason.gmu.edu>). Reading assignments will be provided after each lecture to allow for flexibility. There are no required textbooks for this course; however, here is a list of recommended books to help develop your research and writing skills.

The Elements of Style by Strunk and White
The Craft of Research by Booth, Colomb, and Williams
Economical Writing by McCloskey
A Guide for the Young Economist by Thomson (available online through Mason's library)

Course Outline:

-Introduction (1/23-2/1): Developing an economic imagination

-Part I (2/5 – 3/6): Demonstration of an analysis of an economic problem and public policy

Topic: Educational Quality, Vouchers, and Charter Schools

- Overview of the problem and policy response
- Presentation of relevant economic concepts
- Analysis of peer-reviewed articles in economics
- Review of a non-economic perspective

Assignments:

In-class work and research assignments (various days)

Exam 1 (March 8th)

Annotated Bibliography (March 8th)

-Part II (3/18-3/29): Preparation for student-led analysis (Mar. 18th – Mar. 29th)

Students will be preparing a policy brief and reading list for their presentations.

Assignments Due

Economic Problem and Policy Brief Wiki (March 25th)

-Part III (4/1 -5/6): Student-led analysis of an economic problem and public policy

Detailed schedule will be provided once the topics are determined.

Assignments Due

Analysis Presentations (various assigned days)

Paper Draft (April 29th)

Exam 2 (May 6th)

Final Paper Due (May 13th)

III. Grading

Course Assignments with Weights:

- Class Participation 5%
- Annotated Bibliography 5%
- Policy Briefing Wiki 10%
- Analysis Presentation 10%
- Initial Paper Draft 10%
- Exams (2): 20%
- Final Paper: 20%

Grading Scale (as a percentage):

A +	100-97	B	86 – 83	C-	72 – 70
A	96 – 93	B-	82 – 80	D	66 – 60
A -	92 – 90	C+	79 – 77	F	59 – 0
B+	89 – 87	C	76 – 73		

IV. Course Policies:

Course Expectations: It is expected that all readings will be complete by the start of class and that you come to class ready to participate. *In addition, this class requires significant writing assignments as well as familiarity with graphing and algebraic computations.* If you find yourself struggling with the material at any time, please make an appointment to talk with me as soon as possible. I have strategies that might be helpful.

Class Participation: Attendance and class participation are necessary to have a successful experience in this course. **In addition, I cannot offer a make-up exam without a valid excused absence.** If you are unable to attend class for an excusable reason, please contact me *before* the start of class and for a missed exam please provide proper documentation.

Electronic Devices: *Regarding electronic devices (such as laptops, cell phones, etc.), please be respectful of your peers and your instructor and do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism. If disruptions are interrupting other students' learning, you may be asked to leave the classroom.*

Communication: *Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.*

Honor Code: Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code in its entirety in completing all requirements for this course. The Honor Code parameters will differ depending on the assignment and will be clearly explained for each assignment. If at any time you are unsure about the Honor Code implications for a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

Important: No person should be denied educational access because of a disability. *If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.*

V. Classmate Contact Information & Presentation Date:

Contact #1: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Contact #2: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____