

Economics 102W: Explorations in Economic Literature

Course Information

Fall 2010
 Instructor: Dr. Janice Peterson
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California State University, Fresno
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Section 01 #75580 W 4:00-6:50 pm Social Science Rm 204

Course Description

Economics 102W is an upper-division writing skills course designed to provide students who have some background in academic economics the opportunity to investigate important economic ideas and questions through selected readings from the economics literature -- contemporary and historical. This semester we will focus on the emerging discussion of the implications of the recent/current financial/economic crisis for economic theory and practice. That is, we will ask: Do economists need to change the way they analyze and explain the economy as a result of the crisis ... and if so, how? We will examine current economic writing on this question, as well as the historical context of how economic theory and practice has evolved over time in response to changing economic circumstances and priorities. We will ground our examination of this question in a discussion of the importance of good writing as a tool for economic analysis and expression.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

The primary goals of this course are to provide students with opportunities to apply their economic knowledge in the analysis of current issues while strengthening their written communication skills and their abilities as independent learners. Through class discussion and writing assignments students will demonstrate their ability to:

- *Apply* theoretical and historical arguments in economics to the critical analysis of current economic issues and problems;
- *Communicate in writing* about current economic issues and problems clearly and convincingly to different audiences;
- *Work independently*, taking responsibility for the creation of high quality written analyses; as well as
- *Work collaboratively* in the context of peer review and other group exercises.

W Course Requirements

In accordance with the requirements of an upper division writing skills course (see APM 216, http://www.csufresno.edu/aps/forms_policies/apm/200.shtml), students will write a minimum of 5000 words total in at least five different types of writing assignments. Some writing assignments will be completed in class, and at least two writing assignments will include a cycle of drafts and revision. Students will meet with me individually during the semester to receive feedback on their writing and to discuss particular assignments. A grade of C or better is required to earn W course credit.

Course Prerequisites

Economics 102W is open to students who have met the following requirements: 1. completion of Economics 40 & 50; 2. completion (with a grade of C or better) of the English 5B or 10 graduation requirement and, 3. upper-division standing

Required Reading Materials

- Deirdre N. McCloskey, *Economical Writing*, 2nd ed., Waveland Press (2000).
- Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers*, revised 7th edition, Touchstone (1995).
- Paul Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*, W.W. Norton (2009)
- Articles (from journals and newspapers) and working papers will be posted on Blackboard
- *The New York Times*, available free on campus and on-line (<http://www.nytimes.com>)

Other Course Requirements

Students are required to have a **Fresno State e-mail account** and access to the Internet. Course materials will be posted on **Blackboard** (<http://blackboard.csufresno.edu>).

Course Work and Grading

Course Work

- **Class Participation:** Class participation is a very important part of this course. Students are expected to attend each class meeting, to be prepared, and to contribute to class discussion and make significant contributions to the class.
- **In-Class Writing Assignments:** In-class writing assignments commenting on the assigned reading (**Reading Questions**), responding to current economic news, interpreting economic data, or responding to a class activity will be given throughout the semester. At least one of these writing assignments will involve peer review and a cycle of drafts and revision.
- **Formal (out-of-class) Writing Assignments:** There will be three writing assignments completed out-of-class. The first of these assignments will involve formal peer and instructor review and a cycle of drafts and revision; the second and third assignments will involve informal peer and instructor review. Specific information on the expectations for each assignment will be included in detailed assignment sheets posted on Blackboard.
 1. **Analytical/Application Essay** – “The ‘Worldly Philosophers’ Today: What would a selected (historical) economist say about the financial crisis?” (4 pages + cover sheet; draft due Oct 13; finished essay due Oct 20)
 2. **Book Review** – Review of *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008* (4 pages + cover sheet; due Nov 17)
 3. **Critical/Editorial Essay** – “How should economic theory and practice change in response to the financial crisis?” (6 pages + cover sheet; due Dec 15).

Study Expectations

It is usually expected that students will spend approximately 2 hours of study time outside of class for every one hour in class. Since this is a 3-unit class, you should expect to study an average of 6 hours outside of class each week. Some students may need more outside study time and some less.

Grading

Writing assignments will be evaluated on both the quality of the writing and on the quality of the economic analysis. The quality of writing will be evaluated according to the General Education Writing Rubric (posted on Blackboard).

Course grade

Class Participation & In-Class Writing Assignments	20%	80 pts
Analytical/Application Essay	25%	100 pts
Book Review	25%	100 pts
Critical/Editorial Essay	30%	120 pts
Total	100%	400 pts

Grading Scale: A = 90%+ (360-400 pts) B = 80-89% (320-359 pts) C = 70-79% (280-319 pts)
D = 60-69% (240-279) F = below 60% (239 pts and below)

Please note: Students are responsible for keeping all writing assignments that have been graded and returned throughout the semester. This will be helpful in writing the final essay, and is necessary should there be any questions concerning the final grade.

Academic Policies

Course Policies

- **Class Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend class, to be on time, and to participate fully in class discussions and activities, including **in-class writing assignments**. Students who miss class (or are late) are responsible for all of the information covered in their absence. In -class writing assignments that are missed due to a late arrival or class absence cannot be made up
- **Late Assignments:** W Course requirements specify that student assignments be returned in a timely manner to assure students can benefit from instructor feedback. To facilitate this goal, writing assignments will not be accepted late – they will only be accepted in-class, hard copy, on the day they are due.
- **Classroom Conduct:** Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. This means being respectful in the way you address others and respond to comments and questions in class. This also means not arriving to class late or leaving early on a regular basis; not disrupting class with cell phones; not reading or sending e-mail or text messages during class; not engaging in personal conversations during class; not wearing head-phones and listening to music during class; and not reading the newspaper or doing assignments for other courses during class. If you have any questions about what constitutes inappropriate classroom conduct, please ask me and please see the University Policy on Disruptive Classroom Behavior.
- **Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. In a writing course, plagiarism is a particular concern -- we will discuss appropriate citation and other aspects of avoiding plagiarism as part of our discussion of what constitutes good writing. If you have any questions on what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me and please see the University Honor Code and the University Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism.

University Policies

For the University's Policy on Students with Disabilities, Honor Code, Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism, Policy on Computers, Policy on Disruptive Classroom Behavior, and Copyright Policy, see "Required Syllabus Policy Statements":

http://www.csufresno.edu/academics/policies_forms/instruction/RequiredSyllabusPolicyStatements.htm

Tentative Course Schedule (Fall 2010)

Week	Date	Topic/s	Reading Assignment/s	Writing Assignment/s
1	Aug 25	Course Overview	Course Syllabus, "Past Their Prime (Rate)"	In-class writing
2	Sept 1	Current discussion/debate: "How should economic theory and practice change in response to the financial crisis?"	Bb (Course Docs) Folder: "How should economics change? (Part 1)" <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
3	Sept 8	Good Writing in Economics: Why and How?	<i>Economical Writing</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	In-class writing
4	Sept 15	Good Writing in Economics: Why and How?	<i>Economical Writing</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	In-class writing
5	Sept 22	The historical context of the current discussion/debate.	<i>The Worldly Philosophers</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
6	Sept 29	The historical context of the current discussion/debate.	<i>The Worldly Philosophers</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
7	Oct 6	The historical context of the current discussion/debate.	<i>The Worldly Philosophers</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
8	Oct 13	Analytical/Application Essay: The "Worldly Philosophers" Today	Draft Essay Due for brainstorming/peer review/writing workshop	
9	Oct 20	Current news stories and writing economics, and How to write a book review	<i>The New York Times</i>	The "Worldly Philosophers" Today Finished Essay Due
10	Oct 27	Analysis of recent financial crises and their implications for economics	<i>The Return of Depression Economics</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
11	Nov 3	Analysis of recent financial crises and their implications for economics	<i>The Return of Depression Economics</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
12	Nov 10	Analysis of recent financial crises and their implications for economics	<i>The Return of Depression Economics</i> <i>The New York Times</i>	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
13	Nov 17	Reviews of <i>The Return of Depression Economics</i> , and How to approach the Critical/Editorial Essay	<i>The Return of Depression Economics</i> , Book Review Due Brainstorming session -- Critical/Editorial Essay	

Week	Date	Topic/s	Reading Assignment/s	Writing Assignment/s
14	Nov 24	HOLIDAY – Thanksgiving		
15	Dec 1	Current discussion/debate: “How should economic theory and practice change in response to the financial crisis?”	Bb (Course Docs) Folder: “How should economics change? (Part 2)”	Reading Questions/ In-class writing
16	Dec 8	Students will schedule individual appointments with me to discuss Critical/Editorial essays.		
	Dec 9-10	Final Exam Preparation & Faculty Consultation Days → Consultation Days office hours to be announced		
	Dec 15	Final Exam – 5:45-7:45 pm – Critical/Editorial Essay Due @ 5:45 pm; Discussion 5:45-6:45 pm.		

Extenuating Circumstances

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent.