



## Department of Economics Course Outline

		<b>Term:</b>	Fall 2006
<b>Course:</b>	Economics 349 - [The Economics of Social Problems]	<b>Section:</b>	01
<b>Time:</b>	TR 11:00 ? 12:15	<b>Place:</b>	ST 132 (subject to change)
<b>Instructor:</b>	Ana M. Ferrer		
<b>Office:</b>	SS 427	<b>Telephone:</b>	220-5602
<b>Office Hours:</b>	TR 10:00 ? 11:00	<b>E-Mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:aferrer@ucalgary.ca">aferrer@ucalgary.ca</a>

### Textbook(s):

A series of notes and readings are compiled in the following book for your convenience. It will be used as a guide thorough the course.

*Notes on the Economics of Social Issues*

, Norton. (Available at the UC Bookstore)

### Book(s) on Reserve:

None

### Additional Book(s):

These are books you may want to consult if you want to go deeper into a particular issue of your interest. Additional articles are provided in the detailed course outline.

Schiller, *Economics of Poverty and Discrimination*, Prentice Hall

Miller, Benjamin and North, *The Economics of Public Issues*, Norton, 2001

Sharp, et al., *Economics of Social Issues*, Irwin/McGraw Hill, latest edition  
Becker & Becker, *The Economics of Life*, McGraw Hill  
Lowenstein & Elster, *Choice over Time*, Sage, 1992  
Aaron, *Behavioral Dimension of Retirement Economics*, Russell Sage, 2000  
Elster, *Addiction: Entries & Exits*, Russell Sage  
Blau et al, *Economics of Women, Men & Work*, Prentice Hall  
Frank, *Economics & Behavior*, McGraw Hill

### **Description:**

This course will use the tools of economic analysis to contribute to our knowledge of various social problems in developed economies. Using the economic model of the rational agent, we will explore how individuals behave in a social context and will evaluate policies addressing the issues in question. There will be some emphasis on the workings of labour markets. We will cover a variety of topics including income inequality and poverty, discrimination, crime, and health care. Feel free to propose additional topics of your interest at the beginning of the course.

**Class participation is an important part of your learning experience. You should be prepared to read the assigned material in advance in order to contribute to in-class questions and debates. You are also expected to participate on blackboard forums.**

Most of the questions that will come up have no clear cut response. Therefore, the point of the course is not to find the "right" answer. What you should expect to learn from this course is to identify the many sides of socio-economic problems using economic models, and to be aware of the pros and cons of the policy instruments that we use to solve them.

### **Course Outline:**

The following is a list of the topics (and readings) we will be discussing. Please let me know as early as possible if there are any additional topics you would like to see covered.

- **Understanding Poverty and Inequality in developed countries**

- *Introduction: Recent Facts about Poverty and Inequality.*
- *How to measure Inequality and Poverty.*

- **A Neoclassical Economic Model for the Determination of Income**

- *The Determination of Income: A Model of Labour Markets.* This section develops a model of the leisure-work choice of individuals. It will provide a conceptual framework to analyze the determination of wages and employment.
- *The Effects of Income Maintenance Schemes.* We will use this conceptual framework to review the effect on employment of government interventions that influence either income or wages, like welfare payments, unemployment insurance or wage subsidies.
- *Wage Differentials: Education, Unions, Minimum Wages and Discrimination.* We will further analyze different sources of wage differentials.

- **Multiculturalism**

- *First Nations.*
- *Immigration*
- **Crime and Punishment (In-Class notes)**
- *The Effects of Legalizing Criminal Activities.* The rational choice model will help us to understand the economic determinants of crime and the deterrent effects of punishments.
- *The Underground Economy.* We will discuss the difficulties of analyzing the underground economy, starting with finding a proper definition.
- **Insurance, Health Care and Pensions**
- *Inter-temporal choice.* Briefly review the inter-temporal choice and savings decision of individuals. Examine the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of providing a insurance networks both in developed and developing countries.
- *Canadian Health System.*
- **Poverty and Development**
- *The Link between Development and Growth.* This section analyzes channels through which inequality and poverty affect socioeconomic performance.
- *Developing Markets and Institutions for the Poor.* Understanding the links between development and growth stresses the point that the institutions that we are used to may not be appropriate to help marginal groups or developing countries to prosper. We review alternative institutions that may.

### Grade Determination and Final Examination Details:

Homework Assignments (2)	20%	Midterm ( <b>24 of October</b> )	30%
Class Participation	10%	Final Examination	40%

The format and dates of these tests and assignments will be discussed during the first week of classes. Each assignment is due at the beginning of the lecture on the due date. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** You are welcome to work with a small group (2 or 3 students) on the assignments and a group assignment is to be handed in. All students in the group will receive the same mark for that assignment.

Tests and final exams are marked on a numerical (percentage) basis, and then converted to letter grades. The course grade is then calculated using the weights indicated above. As a guide to determining standing, these letter grade equivalences will generally apply:

A+	97 ? 100	B+	81 ? 85	C+	66? 69	D+	53 ? 56
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A 90 ? 96 B 75 ? 80 C 61 - 65 D 49 ? 52

A- 86 - 89 B- 70 - 74 C- 57 - 60 F 0 - 48

If, for some reason, the distribution of grades determined using the aforementioned conversion chart appears to be abnormal the instructor reserves the right to change the grade conversion chart if the instructor, *at the instructor's discretion*, feels it is necessary to more fairly represent student achievement.

A passing grade on any particular component of the course is not required for a student to pass the course as a whole.

Programmable calculators are NOT allowed during the writing of tests or final examinations. Non-programmable calculators WILL be allowed during the writing of tests or final examinations, but cell-phones are strictly forbidden during the writing of examinations.

### **No deferred midterms will be given**

. In case of documented illness or family emergency, the extra weight will be shifted to the final examination. The Instructor should be *notified in advance* if a student will be unable to write a midterm. In any case, documentation must be provided as soon as possible (within a day or so of the missed midterm).

Students seeking reappraisal of a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, etc.) should discuss their work with the Instructor *within* fifteen days of the work being returned to the class.

There will be a Registrar scheduled **final examination**, lasting 2 hours. The FULL COURSE will be covered.

Tests and exams WILL NOT involve multiple choice questions.

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

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Society of Undergraduates in Economics (S.U.E.):

[www.fp.ucalgary.ca/econ](http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/econ)

Safewalk / Campus Security: 220-5333

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