

Economics 349(L01) The Economics of Social Problems

Instructor:	Kunio Tsuyuhara	Lecture Location:	SB 103
Phone:	403-220-6101	Lecture Days/Time:	TR 8:00 – 9:15
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Office Hours:	WF 12:00 – 13:00 or by appointment	Winter 2023	

Course Description:

This course will examine various social problems, such as crime, demography, environment, health, and politics, through the lens of economics. We first examine how economics analysis approaches social problem emphasizing incentives and individual choices of the rational agent and evaluate existing, or commonly proposed, policies addressing the problems in question. We also examine the limitation of economic approach to those problems both from practical and philosophical perspectives.

The course is lecture-based format, but class participation is an important part of student learning experience. Many of the questions and discussion that will come up in this class have no clearcut response or right answer, and we will learn how to construct logical and consistent arguments from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, the students are encouraged to challenge their own ideas and “opinions” throughout the semester.

Course Learning Outcomes:

After completing the course, students should, at minimum, be able to:

1. identify economic factors behind variety of social problems,
2. apply simple economic analysis to discuss those problems, and
3. analyze the pros and cons of the policy instruments for those problems.

In addition, it is also very important to have critical perspectives on economics as an educated citizen, especially when it comes to policy discussion. To this end, we will learn both strengths and weaknesses of economics analysis throughout the course, and the students are expected to develop critical thinking about social problems. Therefore, after successfully completing this course, students will:

4. be able to investigate economic analysis from both practical and philosophical perspectives,
5. not blindly believe what policy makers, mass media, and even “expert” economists tell them,
6. but instead, be able to make their own critical judgement.

Course Outline:

The course follows the following general structure:

1. Introduction
2. Review of basic microeconomics
3. Social problems on a micro level
4. Introduction to basic macroeconomic concepts
5. Social problems on a macro level
6. Social problems on a global scale

Topics that can be covered in this course include, but not limited to, crime, demography, environment, health, politics, and war, both from micro and macro level. Students’ suggestions for additional or specific topics are welcome.

Prerequisites/corequisites:

Econ 201. Though not required for taking this course, basic macroeconomics and statistics knowledge (at the level of Econ 203 and Stat 213, respectively) will be useful.

Required Textbook:

There is no required textbook for this course. Any standard principles level microeconomics textbook, such as Mankew, Kneebone, Mckenzie, will be a useful reference.

Additional learning resources will be suggested and posted on the D2L throughout the course. Students are responsible for all assigned material, including supplementary material posted on D2L, regardless of whether or not the material was covered in class.

Desire2Learn:

This course will make use of the Desire2Learn (D2L) platform. Students who are registered in the course can log on at <http://d2l.ucalgary.ca> through their student centre. Please note that D2L features a class e-mail list that may be used to distribute course-related information. These e-mails go to your University of Calgary e-mail addresses only.

E-mail Policy:

To avoid confusion that is often created by e-mail messages, please refrain from sending an e-mail asking about course contents, lecture materials, etc. Please come to my office hours for these kinds of questions. You'll be amazed how easy and satisfying it is to resolve your question that way!

Grade Determination and Final Examination Details:

Final grades will be evaluated based on class participation (20%), four writing assignments (total 20%), one midterm project (30%), and the final term project (30%).

To indicate the student progress throughout the semester, a letter grade that corresponds to the official grading system is provided to each component of your work (assignments and midterm project). The final course grade is calculated by applying the weights indicated above to the grade point equivalent of each course component. The weighted average is then converted to a final letter grade according to the official grading system. See <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1-1.html>.

Furthermore, read the following additional and very important details carefully:

- Class attendance is mandatory and will be checked randomly throughout the semester.
- This course will emphasize class participation. Active engagement in the class discussion will not only be counted toward your final grade but also enhance your term project productivity and quality.
- This course will expect the students to have an academic writing experience and be able to write at a decent university level. Therefore, as per the Writing Across the Curriculum Statement in the Calendar, writing and grading thereof will be a factor in the evaluation of student work. <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>.
- The writing assignments will ask you to read a news article related to a social problem you are interested in and write a short critique (max 1 page). The midterm project and the final project will ask you to dig a bit deeper and write a research/policy report (max 5 pages) based on your short critique(s). Details will be discussed in class.
- The writing assignments will be given approximately in every 2~3 weeks.
- The midterm project is due on **February 17 (Fri)** and the final project is due on **April 14 (Fri)**.
- All assignments and projects must be submitted to a designated Dropbox folder on the class D2L. Late submission or email submission of your work **WILL NOT** be accepted under any circumstances.
- There will be no final exam, but students must receive a passing grade on the final project to receive a passing grade in the course.

Reappraisal of Grades:

For Reappraisal of Graded Term Work, see Calendar I.2

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-2.html>

For Reappraisal of Final Grade, see Calendar I.3 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-3.html>

Academic Misconduct and Intellectual Honesty:

Academic Misconduct refers to student behavior that compromises proper assessment of students' academic activities and includes: cheating; fabrication; falsification; plagiarism; unauthorized assistance; failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses; and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar.

Statement of Intellectual Honesty, see Calendar K.4 <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-3.html>

Plagiarism and Other Academic Misconduct <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>

Academic Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services. SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policies on Student Accommodations are available at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf> and <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Student-Accommodation-Policy.pdf>.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act:

Personal information is collected in accordance with FOIP. Assignments can only be returned to the student and will be accessible only to authorized faculty and staff. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/faq-privacy-faculty-members.pdf> and <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/faq-privacy-students.pdf>

Internet and Electronic Communication Device information:

The use of cell phones for any purpose in class is prohibited. Computers and tablets may be used for note taking only unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Copyright Legislation:

See the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Acceptable-Use-of-Material-Protected-by-Copyright-Policy.pdf>. Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Recording of Lectures:

Recording of lectures is prohibited, except for audio recordings authorized as an accommodation by SAS or an audio recording for individual private study and only with the written permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized electronic or mechanical recording of lectures, their transcription, copying, or distribution, constitutes academic misconduct. See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>.

Instructor Intellectual Property:

Course materials created by instructors (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Important Dates:

Please check: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-schedule.html>.

Student Organizations:

Faculty of Arts Students' Association (F.A.S.A.):

Economics Department Representative

Office: SS 803, E-mail: econrep@fasaucalgary.ca and Web: www.fasaucalgary.ca.

Society of Undergraduates in Economics: <https://www.ucalgarysue.com/>.

Society of Undergraduates in Economics is a student run organization whose main purpose is to assist undergraduate economics students to succeed both academically and socially at the University of Calgary. Services include access to the exam bank, career events such as Industry Night and information sessions, mentorship programs, and social events for members. They invite you to join by contacting SUE at sue@ucalgarysue.com.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Arts Students' Centre is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call them at 403-220-3580, or email them at artsads@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns, including program planning and advice.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at 403-210-ROCK [7625] or visit them in the MacKimmie Library Block.

Student Support and Resources:

- See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information on campus mental health resources, the Student Ombuds' Office, Student Success Centre, Safewalk, and Emergency Evacuation and Assembly.
- Online writing resources are available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>.

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