

Spectrum Program Session 1

Course Title: Bubbles & Crashes: Introduction to Economics Honors

Course Description

What caused the housing market bubble to burst? How did the U.S. economy slide into recession? Through readings by prominent economists, discussions and case studies, students examine economic booms and crises of the past and present, focusing on concepts such as supply and demand, the law of diminishing returns, marginal utility and the theory of the firm and industry. Students interested in political science, international relations, or other advanced social science courses are encouraged to apply.

Essential Questions

- How do economists think about problems? How might an economist's approach to help us understand the world's challenges today?
- How does the economy work? What roles do individuals, groups, businesses, and the government play in creating, maintaining, and disrupting this system?

Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- a. define the important concepts of economics and apply them to real-world scenarios.
- b. articulate, defend, and refute arguments using economic theory and real-world examples.
- c. write social-science arguments with sophisticated thesis statements and appropriate use of evidence.
- d. explain the workings of the economic system, including finance, pricing, supply and demand, the role of the government, and the business cycle.
- e. discuss some of the current economic trends and challenges.
- f. analyze the ways in which economic thinking affects current social issues.

Instructional Strategies

This class is designed to give students an introduction to the concepts of economics and their application in different contexts and social situations. Students will engage in role-playing activities, class discussions, and case study analysis to better understand these concepts and understand how they can mean different things to different people. Additionally, students will take part in rational decision-making scenarios and elementary statistical analyses in order to learn and apply mathematics, logic, and economic theory to real-world problems. Finally, students will conduct their own independent social science research on an area of the economy that is interesting to them and present their argument to the group.

Resources and Materials

- **Course readings**

Because the course will cover so much ground in a short period of time, we will be sampling the works of a variety of economists, social theorists, and journalists. All readings will be provided to students as handouts.

- **Web sites**

Students will be required to conduct Internet research on economics and investment websites. Suggestions of reliable and accurate websites will be provided.

- **News articles**

Topical articles from newspapers, magazines, journals, and other periodicals will be supplied as needed. Students will also be required to keep up with current news online or in print.

Student Assessment

- **Pre-Assessment:** All students will be required to complete a short writing assessment at the beginning of the course. This assessment will give me an idea about your reasoning skills and your ability at constructing high-quality social science arguments using both economic theory and real-world examples.

- **CTD Grading Scale**

A+	100-97%	A	96-93%	A-	92-90%
B+	89-87%	B	86-83%	B-	82-80%
C+	79-77%	C	76-73%	C-	72-70%
D+	69-67%	D	66-63%	D-	62-60%
F	below 60%				

- **Breakdown of Final Grade**

1. **20% Daily quizzes** - These will be open-notebook assessments on the assigned readings and topics previously covered in class. These will be used primarily for review of the previous night's reading and to check on progress throughout the course.
2. **20% Participation** - This includes individual study and research habits, work in cooperative activities, and the quality (not quantity!) of contributions to class discussions. This class relies heavily on debate and discussion of controversial issues – you will be expected to participate actively each day and work with others to explain and solve problems. Much of what we will discuss will be counter-intuitive, so asking questions is also an essential part of this class.
3. **20% In-class writing** - The aim of these assessments will be to develop your analytical and persuasive writing skills. They will also give you a chance to share your own opinions on issues involving economics.
4. **20% Research Presentation** - You will be asked to conduct research on a current sector of the economy, explaining why this sector is/is not a good investment at the moment, and its prospects for the future.
5. **10% Final Exam** - This will cover the material from the entire course and questions will be modeled on the same case study approach taken during the course itself.
6. **10% Student goal-setting and self-assessment** - During this course, you will have the opportunity to take some control over your own learning and skills development.

- **Post-Assessment:** All students will be required to complete a final writing assessment (similar to the pre-assessment) that will test your ability to construct sophisticated social science arguments and defend them with theory and real-world evidence.

Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	In-class Activities	Assignments/Assessments (<i>in italics</i>)
Mon 6/27	Intro to Economics Intro to Case Studies Game Theory and Probability	Game theory simulations Case studies Group problem-solving	<i>Intro Writing Pre-Assessment</i> HW: Excerpts from Landsburg, Wheelan, Harford
Tues 6/28	Supply and Demand Prices and Wages	Role-playing Discussion/debate Pricing games	<i>Writing: Prices and/or Wages – in theory and in practice</i> HW: Excerpts from Hazlitt, Bastiat, Marcet
Wed 6/29	Economic theory: Smith, Ricardo, Marx, Keynes	Lecture/discussion Scenarios: Classical vs. modern economics	<i>Writing: Explain the following scenario using both classical and modern economic theories.</i> HW: Excerpts from Simon, Gladwell, Harvard business school case study TBA
Thurs 6/30	Case studies: What makes a company successful/unsuccessful?	Fact-finding, argument-building FILM? GUEST SPEAKER?	<i>Writing: Business case study TBA</i> HW: Excerpts from Hazlitt, Thaler & Sunstein
Fri 7/1	Government and the economy: Taxes, subsidies, the Fed	Creative problem-solving: “Nudges” Introduce group project Group project research	<i>Assessment: What should the role of government be in the following scenarios?</i> HW: Excerpts from Epping, NAFTA readings
Mon 7/4	Free trade: good or bad? NAFTA, etc.	Debate/Class barometer Role-playing/RAFT Trade game	<i>Writing: Evaluate NAFTA</i> HW: Excerpts from Ritzer, T. Friedman, Florida
Tues 7/5	Globalization, Modernization, McDonaldization	Fact-finding/Inquiry Debate Role-playing/RAFT	<i>Writing: GNH/Bhutan scenario</i> HW: Excerpts from M. Friedman, <i>The Economist</i>
Wed 7/6	Social Responsibility and Business	Discussion/Debate Case study analysis: BP, Union Carbide, Nike FILM?	<i>Writing: Social Responsibility argument</i> HW: Excerpts from Malkiel, Epping
Thurs 7/7	Investment: Stocks, Bonds, Real Estate	Investment scenario Cooperative learning Expeditionary learning – investment activity	<i>Assessment: Develop and propose an investment plan (see scenario)</i> HW: Excerpts from Sorokin, Frank
Fri 7/8	What caused the current economic crisis? Who is to blame? What now?	Lobbying Simulation Group project research FILM?	<i>Writing: Who is to blame for the current economic crisis?</i> HW: Fed Readings TBA
Mon 7/11	How the financial system works: CME and the Fed	Field Trip to CME/Chicago Money Museum	HW: Excerpts from Epping, Wheelan, Stiglitz, etc. <i>Assessment: Explain two (2) concepts you learned about from the field trip (see list)</i>
Tues 7/12	What is the best way to alleviate global poverty?	DBQ: Ethical Giving Debate Fact-finding/Inquiry Argument Development	<i>Writing: What is the best way to alleviate poverty?</i> HW: CAMPFIRE readings, excerpts from Wheelan, <i>The Economist</i>
Wed 7/13	Incentives: Economics and the Environment	Creative-problem solving: Environmental scenarios Group project research/prep	<i>Writing: What is the best way to save the environment?</i> HW: Work on group project
Thurs 7/14	Group Presentations Economics children’s book	Creative Project: Economics concepts made simple Presentations\	HW: Economic/financial literacy problems
Fri 7/15	Final Exam Loose ends	Economics dinner party	<i>Final Writing Assessment</i>

CTD Statement on Third-Party Web Sites

Instructors are required to thoroughly review any third-party web sites they intend to use in their courses for inappropriate content. However, because web content continuously changes, CTD disclaims any responsibility for any of the content contained on third-party web sites used in course materials. If you become aware of anything that may be inappropriate, please notify CTD staff immediately.

SAMPLE