



ECON 3540-01: Current Economic Problems

3 Credit Hours
Fall Semester 2019
MW 11:50AM-1:10PM; BU C 105

Instructor: Kevin Conner

Email: kevin.conner@utah.edu

Office Hours: TBD

Office Location: Economics Department (4th floor GC), graduate student desks, section 5
(send an email if you have trouble finding me)

Required Materials

Chang, Ha-Joon (2015) Economics: The User's Guide, New York: Bloomsbury Press.

Other supplemental resources will be made available through the course's Canvas page.

Course Catalog Description

A focus on central problems in the domestic and world economy, with an emphasis on continuing problems, such as the budget and trade deficits, up-to-the-minute issues and the health of the current economy.

Course Overview

This course is intended to provide you an opportunity to apply economic reasoning to some of the contemporary problems that societies face. We will spend time on some looming catastrophes like climate change and financial crisis, but also some more subtle problems like inequality and labor market discrimination. This course will also expose you to some alternative theories that well suited to addressing these specific issues.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will:

- critically analyze and discuss various current issues in the US and world economy from a variety of different points of view.
- be familiar with various forms of economic analysis, and how data can be used to support or refute hypotheses.
- will be well-versed in different forms of policy that are employed to confront current issues.

Teaching and Learning Methods

This course will consist of a combination of traditional lecture and open-ended discussion of readings. There will also be some in class group activities. This course will be quite Canvas heavy. Students should check Canvas frequently to ensure that they complete all assignments.

Assignments

- Canvas Discussion
 - You will be required once this semester to select a news article related to the material we have covered in the previous week. These articles will need to be preapproved to ensure that they are related and that they are from reputable sources. You will also be required to comment on half of these Canvas discussions by the end of the course. A good comment should relate the article to course material, provide an alternative viewpoint, identify weaknesses in the article, or be a constructive response to another student's comment. Remember that common etiquette should extend to the internet. Please, do not type anything you would not say in class.
- Reading Quizzes
 - Forty minutes before each class a short reading quiz will be due. This quiz will be conducted through Canvas. These quizzes help to ensure reading, but they also let me know what elements of the readings that the class may be having difficulty with. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.
- Midterm & Final Exam
 - There will be two written exams conducted in class. Before each of these exams, I will provide you with a pool of questions from which I will select the exam questions. You will be allowed limited notes on both exams.

Grading Policy

Grades will be determined according to the following weights (subject to change):

- Reading Quizzes 20%
- Canvas Discussions 20%
- Midterm 30%
- Final Exam 30%

Grading Scale: E (0-59), D- (60-62), D (63-66), D+ (67-69), C- (70-72), C (73-76), C+ (77-79), B- (80-82), B (83-86), B+ (87-89), A- (90-92), A, (93-100)

Important Dates

Classes begin	_____	Mon, January 6
Last day to add, drop (delete), elect CR/NC, or audit classes	_____	Fri, January 17
Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No Class)	_____	Mon, January 20
Presidents' Day (No Class)	_____	Mon, February 17
Midterm Exam (Tentative)	_____	Wed., March 4
Spring Break	_____	Sun.-Sun, March 8-15
Last day to withdraw from classes	_____	Fri, March 6
Last day of Class	_____	Mon, April 20
Final Exam	_____	Mon, April 27

Tentative Course Outline

- Introduction
 - The Birth of Capitalism
 - A Survey of Theories
- The Outcomes of Economic Activity
 - Measuring Economies
 - Happiness & Growth
 - Inequality & Poverty
- Globalization
 - Trade & Development
 - Climate Change & Environment
- Economic Stability
 - Recession & Depressions
 - Finance & Value
- Labor Markets
 - Production vs Exchange
 - Technology & Sectoral Change
 - Discrimination
- Issues Close to Home
 - Education and Debt
 - Healthcare
 - Housing
- What Can Be Done?
 - Government's Role
 - Money in Politics
 - Collective Action

Course Policies

1. *Attendance and Participation*: No specific grade will be attached to attendance, nor will attendance be taken. However, it will be very difficult to do well in this course without regular attendance, in part due to the participation grade.

2. *Electronic Devices*: Please avoid using electronic devices for non-class related activities during class time.

3. *Late Work and Make Up Exams*: Late work will not be accepted, and no makeup exams will be provided. This policy may be waived in the case of a prior arrangement with me, an emergency, and as required by university policy.

Note: This syllabus is intended to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that it may be modified with reasonable notice. I may also modify the course schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements. The course canvas page has all readings, assignments, and other details organized by week

University Policies

1. *The Americans with Disabilities Act*: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

2. *Addressing Sexual Misconduct*: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776.

3. *Faculty and Student Responsibilities*: All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code (Policy 6-400), spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations (Policy 6-316), it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

4. *Student Academic Conduct*: In order to ensure that the highest standards of academic conduct are promoted and supported at the university, students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. Complete policies available at: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/guides/students/index.php>

5. *Student Wellness*: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness - ww.wellness.utah.edu; 801-581-7776.

6. *Safety Statement*: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.