CLASS OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Class Objectives:

This course will first provide an overview of issues that are critical to the economic well-being of households around the world. We will examine the impact of these issues on the U.S. economy. The bulk of the class, however, will be devoted to public programs that affect the economic well-being of families in the United States. The specific objectives of the course are: (1) to examine the underlying philosophies of U.S. public welfare programs; (2) to analyze these programs and determine their economic impact on households; (3) to gain an understanding of the policy process; and (4) to learn the fundamentals of family economics research.

Integrative Experience: When taken with ResEcon 394 and ResEcon 460, this course (ResEcon 470) will satisfy the General Education Integrative Experience* requirement for Resource Economics majors.

*The Integrative Experience (IE) requirement at UMass Amherst addresses the challenges associated with educational fragmentation. Positioned in the upper-division, the IE provides students with a structured opportunity to look back on their early college learning experiences, reflect upon and make connections between those earlier experiences and the more advanced work in their major, and use their integrated learning to prepare for the demands of the world beyond the University.

In this course, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your prior General Education and Resource Economics course. This will, in part, be accomplished by exploring current issues and problems facing the economic well-being of families and completing a policy analysis on one such issue. You are required to consider your lived experiences and prior classes to build an understanding of the impact of this current issue on American households. In other words, how have your past courses and life experiences as well as your more advanced training in Resource Economics assisted you in analyzing the problem and determining its economic impact on families in order to inform policy.
The following two criteria of IE will be met in this class:

- The family economics policy analysis project will offer you a shared learning experience with the other members of your group for applying your prior learning here at UMass to a real-world problem facing families.
- You will have the opportunity to practice General Education learning objectives of critical thinking, reasoning, collaboration, interdisciplinary approach, and integration of knowledge and perspectives by: (1) engaging in research on a specific family economic issue with your teammates; and (2) presenting your analysis in class and stimulating a discussion.

**Class Policies:**

Class attendance is mandatory. If you are absent from class, you should be prepared to suffer the consequences.

You are expected to keep up with the readings and participate in all class discussions.

**Course Assignments and Exam:**

Your final grade will be based on the following:

- Individual assignment – state economic profile (25 points)
- Individual assignment – case study review (20 points)
- Group project – written paper & oral presentation on a family econ. issue (100 points)
- Midterm exam (100 points)
- Comprehensive final exam (150 points)

**The Respectful Classroom:**

We are all responsible for creating a respectful classroom environment. All students have the right to hear the lecture without being interrupted by other students. The professor has the right to teach without disruptions. In order to achieve a respectful learning environment, we will keep the following in mind:

1. We are on time for class
2. **Class will begin promptly at 1:00 p.m.**
3. We do not pack up to leave before the class is dismissed.
4. We do not engage in uncivil behavior during the lecture such as talking to classmates, walking out of the class, or working on something else.
5. We do not use any electronic devices during class time (unless to take class notes).
6. We follow the Academic Honesty Policy. For information, see http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/
7. We avoid negative language.
8. We will treat each other (fellow students and the professor) with mutual respect.
**Text and Reference Materials:**

**Required:**


**You may find the following books of use in the course. They are on reserve at the library:**


**CLASS SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)**

Tuesday, January 19  
**Topic:** Introduction

Thursday, January 21  
**Topic:** Issues that affect global economic well-being

Tuesday, January 26  
**Topic:** Global issues  
Impact on US economy & households  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 1 & 2

Thursday, January 28  
**Topic:** Global issues  
Impact on US economy & households  
**Reading:** Clark, chapter 3 & 4

Tuesday, February 2  
**Topic:** Economic issues facing US households  
Alternative distribution of income  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 5 & 6

Thursday, February 4  
**Topic:** Alternative distribution of income  
Nature of human beings and responsibilities of society  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 7 & 8

Tuesday, February 9  
**Topic:** Nature of human beings and responsibilities of society  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 9 & 10

Thursday, February 11  
**Topic:** Origin of inequality among people, equality vs. equity  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 11 & 12

Tuesday, February 16  
*No class – Monday class schedule*

Thursday, February 18  
**Topic:** Lorenz curve, Gini coefficient  
Rural Poverty Project  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 13 & 14

Tuesday, February 23  
**Topic:** Reading of case studies  
**Reading:** Clark, chapters 15 & 14

Page 5

Thursday, February 25
Review of case studies
Economic well-being, Absolute vs. relative poverty,

Clark, chapters 17 & 18

Tuesday, March 1

Economic well-being, Absolute vs. relative poverty,
Welfare reform (PRWORA)
TANF, income sufficiency

Thursday, March 3

TANF, income sufficiency

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 1

Tuesday, March 8

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
Hunger issues

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 2

Case study assignment due

Thursday, March 10  Mid-term exam

March 12 – 20  Spring Break

Tuesday, March 22

Hunger issues, SNAP, WIC

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 3

Thursday, March 24

Health care issues, Medicaid & Medicare

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 4

Tuesday, March 29

Health care issues, Medicaid & Medicare
Health insurance for the rest

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 5

Thursday, March 31

Saving for retirement
Social Security program

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 6

State economic profiles due

Tuesday, April 5

Social Security program

Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 7

Page 6

Thursday, April 7

Household indebtedness, Bankruptcy reform
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 8

Tuesday, April 12
Topic: Household indebtedness, Bankruptcy reform
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 9

Thursday, April 14
Topic: Other public programs
      Survival strategies and coping mechanisms
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 10

Tuesday, April 19
Topic: Survival strategies and coping mechanisms

Thursday, April 21
Topic: Employment issues and obstacles, Unemployment
      Choice between welfare and work

Tuesday, April 26
Topic: Wrap-up

Friday, April 29
FINAL EXAM (10:30am-12:30pm)
Stockbridge 124