CLASS OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Class Objectives:

This course will provide an overview of issues that are critical to the economic well-being of individuals and families around the world. Its impact on the U.S. economy will be examined. 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 public 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 courses by engaging with current issues and problems facing 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 its impact on families in order to inform policy?

The following two criteria of IE will be met in this class:

- The family economic 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 on family economic issue (80 points)
- Group project – oral presentation on family economic issue (25 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 available in the library:


CLASS SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

Tuesday, January 21
   Topic: Introduction

Thursday, January 23
   Topic: Issues that affect global economic well-being
Tuesday, January 28  
Topic: Global issues  
Impact on US economy & households  
Reading: Clark, chapters 1 & 2

Thursday, January 30  
Topic: Global issues  
Impact on US economy & households  
Reading: Clark, chapter 3 & 4

Tuesday, February 4  
Topic: Economic issues facing US households  
Alternative distribution of income  
Reading: Clark, chapters 5 & 6

Thursday, February 6  
Topic: Alternative distribution of income  
Nature of human beings and responsibilities of society  
Reading: Clark, chapters 7 & 8

Tuesday, February 11  
Topic: Nature of human beings and responsibilities of society  
Reading: Clark, chapters 9 & 10

Thursday, February 13  
Topic: Origin of inequality among people, equality vs. equity  
Reading: Clark, chapters 11 & 12

Tuesday, February 18  
No class – Monday class schedule

Thursday, February 20  
Topic: Lorenz curve, Gini coefficient  
Rural Poverty Project  
Reading: Clark, chapters 13 & 14

Tuesday, February 25  
Topic: Reading of case studies  
Reading: Clark, chapters 15 & 14

Thursday, February 27  
Topic: Review of case studies  
Economic well-being, Absolute vs. relative poverty  
Reading: Clark, chapters 17 & 18
Tuesday, March 4
Topic: Economic well-being, Absolute vs. relative poverty, Welfare reform (PRWORA) TANF, income sufficiency

Thursday, March 6
Topic: TANF, income sufficiency
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 1

Tuesday, March 11
Topic: Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Hunger issues
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 2
Case study assignment due

Thursday, March 13 Mid-term exam

March 15 – 24 Spring Break

Tuesday, March 25
Topic: Hunger issues, SNAP, WIC
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 3

Thursday, March 27
Topic: Health care issues, Medicaid & Medicare
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 4

Tuesday, April 1
Topic: Health care issues, Medicaid & Medicare Health insurance for the rest
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 5

Thursday, April 3
Topic: Saving for retirement Social Security program
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 6
State economic profiles due

Tuesday, April 8
Topic: Social Security program
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 7

Thursday, April 10
Topic: Household indebtedness, Bankruptcy reform
Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 8
Tuesday, April 15
   Topic: Household indebtedness, Bankruptcy reform
   Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 9

Thursday, April 17
   Topic: Other public programs
           Survival strategies and coping mechanisms
   Reading: Banerjee & Duflo, chapter 10

Tuesday, April 22
   Topic: Survival strategies and coping mechanisms

Thursday, April 24
   Topic: Employment issues and obstacles, Unemployment
           Choice between welfare and work

Tuesday, April 29
   Topic: Wrap-up

FINAL EXAM: TBA