Econ 394CI: The Economics of Cooperative Enterprise Syllabus
Spring 2023 University of Massachusetts (Spire Number 60267)
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:15, Dickinson 212)
3 credits (IE and Upper level Economics)

Material for this course is available through Moodle and UMass Library reserves.

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Course Description:
The Economics of Cooperative Enterprises is designed as a challenging integrative experience (IE) course. Students will be asked to analyze their experiences as workers and consumers, evaluating the impact of organization and industry structure. How do cooperative enterprises (including UMass co-ops such as People’s Market and Earthfoods) differ from other enterprises? Students will also be asked to bring material they have learned in other classes to bear on these issues. For the final project, students work in groups of 3-4 to develop a business plan for a cooperative enterprise that builds upon their interests and expertise.

The integrative experience requirement is designed to enhance integrative learning through upper division courses in students' major fields. Integrative learning comes in many forms; connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences, applying theory to practice, using diverse points of view and understanding issues and arguments contextually.

The three central learning objectives of the integrative experience are to reflect on and to integrate their learning and experience from General Education courses and their major, to practice General Education learning objectives such as oral communication, collaboration, critical thinking and interdisciplinary perspective-taking, at a more advanced level, and to offer a shared learning experience for applying prior learning to new situations, challenging questions, and real-world problems.

Core assignments are two short papers and a final project. The papers ask students to relate their personal experience to the material covered in the course, for 30% of the grade. The final project requires students to work together in teams to develop a practical business plan for a cooperative, and counts for 40% of the grade. Other assignments, including three short quizzes, account for the remainder.

The objective of all these assignments is to directly to integrate learning and experience from General Education courses and the economics major. The structure of these assignments also directly addresses the objectives of collaboration, oral communication and shared learning experiences.
The nature of the writing projects requires critical thinking and interdisciplinary perspective-taking at a more advanced level. The business plan, in particular, is based on the objective of applying prior learning to new situations and real world problems. It will ask you to combine the theory and practical work you did in class with your experiences and perspectives in a very applied way.

**Course goals and guiding questions:**
The basic course syllabus was designed by the UMass Cooperative Enterprise Collaborative, which includes faculty and graduate students from the Economics Department, and members of the Valley Alliance of Worker Cooperatives (VAWC), and Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) with on-the-ground experience in cooperatives. The course is required for the Applied Economic Research Certificate in Cooperative Enterprise, which is built around a research internship with a cooperative business.

The goals in this course are to provide the best possible learning experience for students and also to foster more effective collaboration between students and cooperative enterprises in the local community. We believe this collaboration can promote relevant research, develop new work opportunities, and contribute to local economic development.

Discussion assignments and short quizzes are organized around consideration of central questions that should also inform the final business plan for a cooperative enterprise:

1) How can cooperative enterprises lead to better outcomes for workers, consumers, the environment and society as a whole?
2) How has history of Economics ignored collaborative and cooperative enterprises and misunderstood the role of community and collaboration in capitalist businesses?
3) How does cooperation compare with individualism in Economic Theory and what does this mean for Economics?
4) How can cooperatives and worker-owned businesses successfully compete with capitalist firms?
5) Do cooperatives and worker-owned businesses challenge or complement the capitalist system?

**Requirements and grading:**
The assignments in this course are designed to reward consistent effort and conscientious participation. Attendance will be taken. If you miss class for good reason (such as illness, technology, etc) please let the instructor know and you will be excused. Five (5) points can be deducted from your FINAL grade for every unexcused absence. Consistent unexcused lateness will be penalized. The assigned readings average about 100 pages per week. This is a lot! Plan your schedules to effectively prepare in advance.
As part of the Integrative Experience, students will be asked to write two short papers (3 pages each) addressing self-reflective questions and discussion in class. These are due during weeks 3 and 7. Each student will also be required to make one presentation (15 min) on one of the Supplemental Readings or some other topic (either suggested or approved by the instructor). Your peers will grade you and give you feedback. Students must take the initiative to arrange their presentation. The Course moodle site has details on assignments by week and due-dates.

**Summary of performance criteria:**

**10% of grade:** Peer assessment of your classroom individual presentation on a supplemental reading. Can happen most weeks of the semester.

**10% of grade:** Class attendance and participation. This includes class attendance and filing out assessments of the work on your peers on supplemental presentation and the group business plan presentations.

**20% of grade:** Two short papers (3 pages each) based on the self-reflective questions above (10% each) that must be handed into the instructor.

**30% of grade:** 3 quizzes (10% each). These are scheduled quizzes (dates specified on syllabus/moodle) which will be open for about two days on moodle. They will ask for short responses to questions regarding the readings relevant to the five questions outlined above. Each quiz will have 10 questions; you will answer most of these questions with a short paragraph; if you have done the readings and participated fully in class discussion, you should be fully prepared for these quizzes. Half of these questions will be written by your classmates about their classroom presentations on supplemental readings and will be provided to you before you open the quiz.

**30% of grade:** A final project, consisting of a detailed business plan for a cooperative enterprise that is both anticipates and seeks to resolve possible challenges by drawing from the assigned readings. (10% Draft, 10% presentation, 10% final business plan). You should work collaboratively on this final project with at least one but no more than three other students. Peer assessment will be taken into consideration. The final project must be presented in three forms: as a brief (not more than 5 page) draft, as a brief (no more than 10 page) paper with accompanying spreadsheet budget, and a ten to fifteen-minute zoom presentation with shared slides during class time. This project will be evaluated based on four components for grading: the business plan itself, discussion of relevant assigned readings, quality of final in-person presentation, and ratings given you by other members of your group. If you don’t work with others, your final presentation will be marked down significantly.

Overall Letter grades for the course are assigned according to the following: 95-100 (A), 90-94(A-), 87-89(B+), 84-86(B), 80-83(B-), 77-79(C+), 74-76(C), 70-73(C-), 60-69(D+), 50-59(D), below 50(F).

**Required and supplemental Readings**

All the required and supplemental (optional) readings and materials (including videos) will be available through moodle with the exception of those that are available free, electronically through the UMass Library. There is a UMass Libraries course materials link in the first block of moodle. Required readings and materials are from main course...
books and from articles and chapters and videos posted on moodle. There are folders for each week when there are required readings posted which are not available through the UMass Libraries course materials link. There are also reading folders for supplemental readings each week. These supplemental readings are available to everyone in class but all but one (over the semester) is required for each student. Each student will choose one supplemental reading, sign up for a presentation time, and teach the reading to the class. If you want a hard copy of either if the main e-books (below) you may order them through ecampus/UMass. The main books are Joseph Blasi, Richard Freeman and Douglas Kruse, *The Citizen's Share. Putting Ownership Back into Democracy.* 2014. Yale University Press. ($38.00), and John Restakis, *Humanizing the Economy. Cooperatives in the Age of Capital.* 2010. New Society Publishers ($19.95).

**Accommodation Policy:**
The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and help create a barrier-free campus. If you have a documented disability on file with Disability Services ([www.umass.edu/disability](http://www.umass.edu/disability)), you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in this course. If your disability requires an accommodation, please notify your instructors as early as possible in the course so that we may make arrangements in a timely manner. Please let me know so we can work together.

**Preferred Gender Pronoun and Name:**
Class rosters are provided to instructors with the student’s legal name (although you can now put in your preferred pronouns). Please let me know if you use a different name. Also, when you introduce yourself to the instructors or other students please take the opportunity to share your preferred pronouns.

**Academic Honesty:**
The kind of work we do at a university requires trust and shared norms about issues of academic honesty. Students are responsible for knowing and complying with the University of Massachusetts academic honesty policy: [http://www.umass.edu/honesty](http://www.umass.edu/honesty). Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for assignments or for this course. Representing the words or ideas of another without citation as one’s own work in any academic exercise is plagiarism. Turnitin will be utilized in moodle for writing assignments to ensure students are doing original, honest work.

**In-Class Recordings by Students and Selling of Notes:**
Students may only use the notes they take from class for their own personal use, and not share (sell) these notes via an outside vendor or entity without the faculty/instructor’s permission. This pertains to in-class recordings as well. Usage of the notes or in-class recordings in this way without my (The Instructor Valerie Voorheis) permission is a violation of my copyright protection.
**Contingency Plan:**
Class may be cancelled when the University closes based on inclement weather. Policy here: https://www.umass.edu/newsoffice/article/emergency-closing-and-snow-related-5
Classes may experience disruptions to the normal operations of class for a variety of reasons including changes in policy, your course instructor having difficulties, the university experiencing technology issues with campus technology, or national or worldwide technology outages related to our communication tools including Zoom. In addition to official UMass announcements, whenever possible, the instructor will use class announcements and/or email to notify students of any emergency changes or adjustments to the course.

**Title IX:**
Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, providing protection against sexual harassment and violence, bullying, and pregnancy and parenting discrimination. While we encourage you to report incidents or concerns to Title IX staff, there are a number of other offices you may choose to contact. Here you will find a list of both confidential and non-confidential organizations, along with contact information and details on how they can help. Your professor is not a Mandatory reporter for Title IX reporting.