

Econ 3960-001: Special Topics – Economic Research in the Community

Spring 2006

Professor Maloney

Office: KDGB 318 / Phone: 581-7704

E-mail: Maloney@economics.utah.edu

TA / Service Learning Coordinator:

Rogier Kamerling

E-Mail: kamerlin@economics.utah.edu

Phone: 581-7481 (Econ Dept Office)

The purpose of this course is to enable advanced economics majors to put their analytical skills to work in the local community. The course is structured as a “coordinated independent study.” Each student will be matched with a local community agency and will work on a research project defined by the agency. Simultaneously, each student will work with the instructor to carry out an academic research project on a topic related to the student’s “agency work.” This academic component will include writing several critical essays evaluating professional economic research in the student’s topic area and ultimately developing a substantial research paper on the topic. The course will also include reflection and discussion through a WebCT site and through periodic group meetings. The final grade will reflect the student’s work on the critical essays and final academic research paper, their participation in discussion and reflection, and the agency’s assessment of the student’s work on the agency’s project. **Most of the work will be carried out independently, but we will meet several times at the beginning of the semester and occasionally thereafter. These meetings will be held in BUC 302 on Wednesdays from 4:00 to 5:30.**

Schedule:

Week 1 (1/9 to 1/13):

- ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING WEDNESDAY 1/11, 4 PM, BUC 302. Discussion of expectations regarding both agency work and academic research. Presentation of project descriptions by agency representatives.

Week 2 (1/16 to 1/20):

- MEETING WEDNESDAY 1/18, 4 PM, BUC 302. Additional presentations by agency representatives.
- BY FRIDAY, 1/20: Each student should e-mail to me a ranked list of three agency projects they would like to work on, including a rationale for why they would be a good match for each of the three projects they list.

Week 3 (1/23 to 1/27):

- Finalization of agency matches, initial meetings with agencies: **BY MONDAY, 1/23**, I will contact the agencies and students informing them of the matches. Students should then arrange to meet with their agency representatives during this week.

Week 4 (1/30 – 2/3):

- Ongoing agency work.
- **MEETING WEDNESDAY 2/1 BUC 302 4 PM** to discuss sources for the academic paper and to do some discussion/reflection on agency work.
- First WebCT discussion/reflection questions posted by Friday, 2/3.
- Initial topic proposals for academic papers due: **BY FRIDAY, 2/3**, students should e-mail to me a one-paragraph topic proposal for their academic paper. This paper should be related to, but not identical to, their agency work. I will send comments back to students early the following week.

Week 5 (2/6 – 2/10):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection
- **BY FRIDAY, 2/10**, students should submit to me a revised proposal for their academic paper, along with complete citations of 4 pieces of professional research in economics to be used in the critical reviews (and ultimately in the research paper). I will e-mail students with reactions and suggestions early the following week.

Week 6 (2/13 – 2/17):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- **FIRST CRITICAL REVIEW DUE BY FRIDAY, 2/17.**

Week 7 (2/20 – 2/24):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- **SECOND CRITICAL REVIEW DUE BY FRIDAY, 2/24.**

Week 8 (2/28 – 3/3):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- **THIRD CRITICAL REVIEW DUE BY FRIDAY 3/3.**

Week 9 (3/6 – 3/10):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- **FOURTH CRITICAL REVIEW DUE BY FRIDAY 3/10.**

NOTE: Spring Break 3/13 – 3/17

Week 10 (3/20 – 3/24):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- MEETING WEDNESDAY 3/22, 4 PM, BUC 302 to discuss agency work and expectations regarding academic research paper.

Week 11 (3/27-3/31):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- OUTLINE OF ACADEMIC PAPER DUE FRIDAY 3/31.

Week 12 (4/3 – 4/7):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.

Week 13 (4/10 – 4/14):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- DRAFTS OF ACADEMIC PAPERS DUE FRIDAY 4/14.

Week 14 (4/17 – 4/21):

- Ongoing agency work.
- Ongoing WebCT discussion/reflection.
- Drafts returned with suggestions for revision.

Week 15 (4/24 – 4/26):

- MEET WEDNESDAY 4/26 BUC 302 4 PM TO SUBMIT FINAL PAPERS, have final discussion/reflection.

Composition of grades:

Research proposals (initial and revised) – 5 points total

Critical reviews: 10 points each – 40 points total

Outline of academic paper – 5 points

Draft of final paper – 5 points

Final paper – 20 points

Agency evaluation – 15 points

Participation in WebCT discussion/reflection – 10 points

Further Information on Assignments and Grading:

(1) Critical Reviews and Research Paper:

Additional information on the expectations for these assignments, as well as on finding sources, will be discussed at our meeting on February 1. Note that the grading of these assignments will reflect both the final products as well as intermediate steps (initial and revised proposals, an outline, and a draft).

(2) “Class Participation”

Beginning February 3, we will periodically post discussion questions in the WebCT discussion board. These questions will deal with your experiences working with local agencies, your academic projects, and the connections between the two. All students must post a response to each “required” question posed by the instructor or the TA. Simply making these required postings will earn 8 of the 10 class participation points. Whether a student earns the 9th or 10th point will depend on evaluation of the student’s participation by the instructor and TA (Did the student’s responses indicate substantial reflection on the relevant issues? Did the student provide only the minimal number of responses even when the discussion continued well beyond the initial question?).

(3) Agency Evaluation:

Throughout the semester, the TA / Service Learning Coordinator and the instructor will be in contact with agency representatives to be sure that students are fulfilling their service learning commitments and to deal with any problems that arise. In addition, at the end of the semester, agency representatives will provide the instructor with a brief evaluation of each student’s performance during the semester. Fifteen percent of your grade will depend on this information.