

**Econ 191: The Economics Behind Our Lives**

- 03 Monday 2:30pm-3:20pm Dickinson 216  
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**Fall 2018 @ UMass Amherst****Instructor: Anastasia Wilson****Email: [anastasw@econs.umass.edu](mailto:anastasw@econs.umass.edu)****Office Hours: by appointment in Gordon Hall 107****Mailbox: Gordon Hall 104 Graduate Student Mailboxes****Preliminary Syllabus & Course Schedule****Last Updated August 28, 2018****Course Description & Objectives**

Econ 191 is a one-credit First Year Seminar course through the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences for new economics majors and exploratory track students. This course is designed to help students with a smooth transition to attending college in the classroom and on campus, and to inform you about the academic field of economics here at UMass-Amherst.

The course intends to share tools for student success in the classroom, on campus, and beyond the university. Our lectures, assignments, and class meetings will be designed to help you in transitioning to college life, preparing for academic success, planning academic goals, understanding economics as a major, getting to know campus and community resources, thinking about time management and self-care, and many other topics.

Alongside these materials, we will discuss “real world” examples of how economic theory and analysis relates to our everyday lives and lived experiences. Economics can be thought of broadly as the study of how society, groups, and individuals deal with the issues of allocating, provisioning, and producing resources- from material goods, to time, to knowledge, and so on. In a sense, most of our existence as social beings relates somehow to these economic questions and conflicts. In recent years, economic topics have become hot button issues in the news and political debates. Issues of inequality, , minimum wage, trade and globalization, racial inequality, economic crises (The Collapse of 2008 and Great Recession), the environment (What are the economic causes and implications of climate change?), and many more topics are at the forefront of the most important struggles of our time.

The goal is for this course to be a resource for you in successfully and happily transitioning to college, and to be introduced (and hopefully excited for) the economics

major. The classroom will be a participatory space for you to share insights and ask questions about college, life at UMass, learning in general, and the field of economics.

As the instructor, I maintain the right to change the syllabus content with appropriate notice.

### **Texts and Materials**

All readings and materials will be either posted online, emailed, or provided by the instructor. No need to purchase a textbook, but some of our readings may encourage you to purchase some popular books in economics such as Thomas, Piketty's *The Economics of Inequality*, Robert Heilbroner's *The Worldly Philosophers*, and others works.

### **Moodle**

Course materials, including readings, some assignments, and the syllabus, will be posted on Moodle: <http://moodle.umass.edu>. The Moodle page and your email will be our main channels of communication beyond the classroom, so please check frequently.

### **Class Attendance**

Attendance for this seminar is required, and attendance will be taken for each meeting. Attendance and participation in the course will count towards your grade.

### **Class Participation**

An important part of learning is the act of learning from one's peers. This is done through group discussion both as a class and in small breakout groups. For that reason, participation in the seminar is required and counted towards your grade in the course. While participation may be easier for some than others, the goal is to build an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel and are welcome to discuss, ask questions, share thoughts, and so on. Online participation will also be an important component of our course, with many homework assignments taking place on Moodle.

### **Note on Academic Honesty**

Students must comply with the university's academic honesty policy, available here: <http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>. Plagiarism should always be avoided, and in class we will discuss how avoid plagiarism in academic work.

### **Classroom Etiquette, Netiquette, and Other Expectations**

We'll try to integrate as much discussion as possible into our seminar. *Your participation is crucial to making this work*, as is your ability to listen and respect your peers in that conversation. It's important to build an inclusive and welcoming discussion environment in our classroom, and be aware that this is in fact a goal of our course. Some students prefer to talk more often than others, but you should try to be as self aware as possible of

whether or not you've taken too much or too little of the classroom discussion space. In class, we'll use different methods to structure our discussion and make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate. As we cover some areas that may be "hot topics" for debate, it is also crucial that we discuss in a respectful manner, avoid profanity and slurs, and try to use language in a way that's accessible to everyone in the classroom.

Etiquette is important not just in person, but also online. Remember when sending emails to any instructors, professors, TAs, and other students, that they will need time to read and respond, especially during the busy times of the semester. Remember to always be courteous and professional, and to avoid ambiguity. Similarly, on Moodle, you will want to be clear, concise, and respectful in emails and discussion board posts.

### **Assignments & Grading**

This is a one-credit seminar that is letter graded, so how well you do in this class will impact your GPA. We will have two types of assignments: one is related to the SBS Exploration Topic- an ongoing project you will work on throughout the semester. The rest will be other assignments relevant to our seminar. Assignments will be a mixture of both in class and homework assignments (many submitted on Moodle).

For final grades, we'll follow a standard letter grading scheme and grades will be determined by the following:

SET Assignments 40% (10 assignments at 4 points each)  
 Other Assignments 40% (10 assignments at 4 points each)  
 Attendance & Participation 20% (determined by attendance record and instructor)

### **SBS Exploration Topic**

This ongoing project for the semester is designed to help familiarize academic research skills for social science through a series of assignments. You will build these skills by preparing a research question and literature review over the course of the semester. The project will provide you with the following:

1. Competence in basic academic skills
2. Understanding SBS Basics
3. Learning and occupying the role of an SBS student
4. Learn to correctly cite and format sourced information
5. Interact with faculty
6. Become comfortable effectively navigating the UMass library database
7. Engage in a class presentation and demonstrate comfort speaking in front of a group

## Course Schedule

The instructor can update and change the syllabus as is seen fit. You will be notified of any changes in the schedule.

*Introductory Weeks*  
*Tuesday September 4 (short intros)*  
*Monday September 10//Tuesday September 11*

Topic: Welcome & Introductions

In-Class Activity: Introductions & What Do We Want From the FYS?

In Class Assignment: Letter to Myself in December 2017

Reading/Materials for Next Class: “It’s On The Syllabus” Inside Higher Ed blog post  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/10/18/t-shirt-many-professors-would-enjoy-wearing>

On the UMass Economics Department:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/04/24/inside-the-offbeat-economics-department-that-debunked-reinhart-rogooff/>

Homework Assignment: Syllabus Assignment + Economics in the News

*Monday September 17 // Tuesday September 18*  
*Add/Drop Ends 9/17*

Topic: What Is Economics?: An Intro to the “Dismal Science” at UMass; Introducing the SET Assignments and Thinking like the Social Scientist

In-Class Activity: Breakout Group Discussion & Activity of What is Economics

In-Class Assignment: SET Brainstorm Assignment

Homework Assignment: What is Economics Discussion Assignment + Economics in the News

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

Introduction from Heilbroner’s *The Worldly Philosophers* to be posted on Moodle

Campus Groups and Activities: <https://umassamherst.campuslabs.com/engage/>

Undergraduate Economics Club:

<http://www.umass.edu/economics/undergraduate/opportunities/uec>

*Library Days: Please note each section will have a different day for a Library Tutorial with Librarian Stephen McGinty. Details to be announced via Moodle.*

03 Monday 2:30pm-3:20pm Dickinson 216 **Oct 1**  
 04 Tuesday 1:00pm-1:50pm Dickinson 216 **Sept 25**  
 05 Tuesday 2:30pm-3:20pm Dickinson 216 **Sept 25**  
 06 Tuesday 4:00pm-4:50pm Dickinson 114 **Oct 2**

*Monday September 24// Tuesday September 25*

Topic: The Economics Major, Economics Department, and Current Research Topics in Economics

In-Class Activity: Economics Discussion; Campus Groups and Activities Discussion

In-Class Assignment: SET Research Question Drafts

Homework Assignment: Time Tracker & Time Wasters Assignment

Reading: Readings on Effective Time Management posted on Moodle

*Monday October 1// Tuesday October 2*

Topic: Effective Time Management;; News Sources

In-Class: Time Tracker and Time Wasters Discussion; Discussion of SET News Sources

Homework: SET Topic Statement & Research Question

*Monday October 8 HOLIDAY // Tuesday October 9 (CANCELLED/Monday Schedule)*

*Monday October 15//Tuesday October 16*

**Topic: Guest Lecture from Econ Advisors (A very important class to attend!!!)**

**In-Class: Guest visit from academic advisors**

Homework: SET Two News Sources

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

Read for Next Class: "The Craft of Research Chapter 1" posted on Moodle

Read for Next Class: Evaluating Resources linked on Moodle

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/553/>

*Monday October 22//Tuesday October 23*

Topic: The Mid-Semester Date; SMART Goals; Navigating Academic Databases & Resources

In-Class: SMART Goal Setting Activity and Assignment

Homework: SET Two Academic Sources

Personal Exploration Assignment Visiting a Campus Resource

Reading/Materials for Next Class:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

[http://turnitin.com/assets/en\\_us/media/plagiarism-spectrum/](http://turnitin.com/assets/en_us/media/plagiarism-spectrum/)

Learning Resource Center <http://www.umass.edu/lrc/>

Writing Center <https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>

*Monday October 29//Tuesday October 30  
Last Day to Drop with W or add P/F on 10/30*

Topic: Behavioral Economics; Campus Resources; Citations & Annotated Bibliographies

In-Class: Behavioral Economics Discussion and Activity; Watch

*Predictably Irrational* with Dan Ariely

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9X68dm92HVI>

Homework: Pre-Registration Activity in Class

*Monday November 5//Tuesday November 6*

Topic: Registration Planning Workshop

In-Class: Pre-Registration Activity & Worksheet

Homework: Registration Plan Assignment

SET Visual Figure due next Class on Moodle

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Healthy Living Reading posted on Moodle

*Tuesday November 13//Wednesday November 14 (Monday Schedule!)*

Topic: Taking Care: Wellness and Self-Care in the College Environment; Peer Editing of Annotated Bibliography

In-Class: Discussion of Health and Wellness Resources, Health Economics: Inequality & Health, watch talk by Richard Wilkinson

[https://www.ted.com/talks/richard\\_wilkinson?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_wilkinson?language=en)

Homework: Putting Together Your SET Project Draft

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Read Library Resources for Writing and Research

<http://www.library.umass.edu/services/writing-and-publication/>

<http://www.library.umass.edu/services/research/>

~~~~~*Thanksgiving Break*~~~~~

*Monday November 26//Tuesday November 27*

Topic: Guest Speakers from Career Services; Drafting Your SET Project

In-Class: Guest Speakers and SET Project Drafts

Homework: Semester 1 Inventory Assignment in in Class and on Moodle  
SET Project Revisions

Reading/Materials for Next Class: Browse John Maynard Keynes's *Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren* posted on Moodle

*Monday December 3//Tuesday December 4*

Topic: Reflecting on the First Semester & Moving Forward

In-Class: Group Activity on Lessons from First Semester; SET Presentations

Homework: Self Assessment and Letter to Myself on September 1, 2026 on Moodle  
SET Final Draft

*Monday December 10//Tuesday December 11*

Topic: Wrapping Up Our First Year Seminar/Reflection Assignment Due December 14,

In-Class: SET Presentations