

JOURNALISM ECONOMICS

1034

~~ECN~~

ECN 101-4

Philosophy:

Since Economics has been defined as the study of mankind trying to make a living, it stands to reason that Economics is involved in every aspect of human life, regardless of stage of development or political ideology.

Economics has also - perhaps more aptly - been defined as the study of what mankind does with scarce resources. This implies that all production and all consumption and all division of the wealth of the world, fall into the realm of Economics.

Nearly all major news stories are stories of conflicts, be it simply a matter of a religious organization trying to pay off a mortgage. Since most conflicts, including crime stories, are caused by the desire to distribute the wealth of the world in different ways, it stands to reason that a journalist must understand the underlying causes as to why our society takes the form it does and why and how certain people or groups of people are outside the accepted norms, so that a story can be investigated, developed and written up in a logical, effective way.

Course Goals:

Despite the cliché that human behaviour is unpredictable, it has been possible to discover certain trends and develop 'laws' of human behaviour and its effect. The Goal of this course is therefore, to acquaint the students with some basic economic laws and see their aptness in reality, so that articles and stories may be developed clearly, logically and thoroughly. This means that students should learn to appreciate the implications of certain newsworthy actions on the part of society or any member or groups of members thereof. This is important for many reasons, but especially in light of the fact that they may have to interview people who at first glance may appear to have nothing to do with the story now breaking. If they can see the implications of a certain event they should be able to interview the right persons and ask the right questions.

ECN

Week 1

Introduction. What is Economics? Why should you study it? How does this study affect you and how does economics itself affect you? Some problems facing mankind today. (Over population, food shortage, genetic damage and all the other pleasantries which have given Economics the name of 'dismal science'). Malthus. The law of scarcity Production Possibilities curve. Social costs.

Assignment: Write a news story dealing with one or more of the above mentioned problems.

Week 2.

Law of Diminishing Marginal Returns.
Introduction of the Law of Supply and Demand.
Assignment: as before.

Week 3.

Development of the Law of Supply and Demand. Its implications. How it affects daily living, from food prices to wages. Cost of Living Index, what it means, how it is prepared.
Assignment: as before, plus reading assignment.

Week 4.

Seminars dealing with the assigned reading material.

Week 5.

Reading assignment.
Government interference in the free working of the economy. Floor and ceiling prices, support prices, equalization payments to the Provinces.
Regular assignment: Seminar, dealing with assigned reading material.

Week 6.

Reading assignment.
Money: Definitions, its qualities and roles. Brief history of the development of money.
Seminar, dealing with assigned reading material.
No written assignment.

Week 7.

Reading assignment.
Banking, the multiplier effect of fractional reserve system. Bank of Canada.
Regular assignment, dealing with works of weeks 6 and 7.

Week 8.

Working of a simple economy. The role of Government. Circular flow. Is welfare bad? G.N.P.
No assignments.

Week 9.

Taxation, transfer payments deficit and surplus financing.
Reading and regular assignments.

Week 10.

Seminars, dealing with reading assignments and all the material studied to this point.
This is a 'freewheeling' week, for diagnostic and solidification purposes.

Week 11.

Reading assignment.
Bank of Canada. Monetary policy, fiscal policy.
Regular assignment.

Week 12.

Propensities to save and to consume. Marginal propensities.
Multiplier. Developed vs. underdeveloped countries. Investment.
Cost of investment.
Regular assignment.

Week 13.

Expansion via the export multiplier and the diminution of the multiplier because of imports.
No assignment.

Week 14.

The role of Labour Unions. Inflation and deflation. The role of Unions. The 'inflationary psychology' (and deflationary psychology). Graphical presentations of the 'gaps'.

Week 15.

Seminars based on the entire readings and course. Questions and answers. A brief look at the Stock Market. Relationship between bond prices and interest rates.

Week 16.

Hand in final assignment.

Methodology: As indicated above, this will be taught primarily by lecture and seminar. However, the nature of the subject and the discipline the students selected, is very conducive to dealing, seminar fashion, with current major economic news stories, as e.g. a few years ago, the sudden release of 'Nixonomics'.

Evaluation

The assignments, individualized where possible, as outlined above, will constitute the total written workload by students. It is proposed that each paper will have equal value and that the final assessment is arrived at by taking a straight average of the assignment and three test marks. Attendance will be compulsory.

Textbook: K. Stegemann, et al; Micro Economics applied to Press Reports, Holt, Rinehart.
Use of my notes, but in modified and to be re-written fashion.

FORMAT OF ASSIGNMENTS

Since these assignments are to be written in newspaper style, nothing can be said about the length of the papers. Students are simply expected to write as long as they have anything meaningful to say to the topic. 'Snowjobs' and peripheral material will not be acceptable.

The papers will be marked first on the basis of the quality of the economic analysis and secondly, by a Journalism teacher, for style, set-up, etc.

For each story there will be a deadline. After this deadline the story will not be accepted and the student fails that particular assignment.

It is essential that:

- a) The paper be used on one side only.
- b) That there are 1½" margins on both sides of the paper.
- c) That the lines are TRIPLE spaced.
- d) That they are TYPED after the fifth week in the course.
- e) Well-organized - rambling will lower the marks, as will superfluous material.
- f) No foot-notes or references are given except in the body of the paper where it would take the form of a quote.