COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we explore poverty, discrimination, inequality, and immigration in the contemporary U.S. macroeconomic context.

We will also move beyond the boundaries of economics and examine these topics from an interdisciplinary perspective. This means that we will incorporate economic history, public policy, technological change, legal-institutional environments, as well as political and social-psychological determinants of behavior, into our understanding of these topics.

In this course, we will also emphasize integration, synthesis, and model building: Linking theory to real world problems; connecting the dots of a logical argument; reaching across different disciplines; Interpreting and using data in context; and; entertaining a variety of perspectives on a problem.

This is a writing enhanced course. This means that we will use writing to discover, process, and learn. Our focus for all writing assignments and discussion will be on critical thinking (exploration, integration, and connecting the dots), metacognition (reflecting on our thinking and writing), quantitative literacy (using and interpreting data in stride).

In short, we will try to think and act like economists and enlighten others about the way the world works.

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

In general, you will leave this course as a more expert and aware learner, a better critical thinker, a more socially responsible member of this community, and, most definitely, a more polished writer. In particular, you should be able to discuss the economic problems we address, explain why (or why not) they are problems, and use economic models and empirical data to understand and analyze these problems (LG1&2). You should also be able to consider and navigate alternative perspectives and their ethical implications (LG3). Finally, you should be able to logically and/or empirically support existing solutions, or critique existing solutions and formulate alternatives.

All readings, videos, & assignments will be posted or linked on PolyLearn
Course Outline: A detailed and active Course Schedule will be posted on PolyLearn along with the readings and assignments. Please check it regularly so that you are prepared for every class and do not miss assignment deadlines.

Module 1: Biases, Irrationality and Systems of Thinking and Behaving
Module 2: Poverty: Misperceptions, Theories, Reality, Stories, Assumptions, Policies, Data, Measures, Solutions
Module 3: Theories of Economic Success, Misperceptions, Meritocracy, Hard-work, 10,000 hours, Grit, Resilience, Failure, Marginal Productivity, Returns to Marginal productivity
Module 4: Economic Inequality and Economic Mobility: Reality, Myths, Misperceptions, Data, Historical Trends, Causes, Consequences, Relationships, Linkages to Immigration
Module 5: Discrimination: Race, Gender, Class and Ethnicity, Connections across Disciplines, Reading the Data.

Overview: This course uses a flipped classroom model so classes will be more active and hands-on. For each class, you will typically have a reading and journal assignment, video clip, and/or PPT or screencast to view. I consider these at-home assignments preparation or “background material,” which ensures that you will come to class prepared and ready to be successful. Any in-class assignments, discussions, or quizzes will presume that you are prepared. I will facilitate the material, enhance and help to make it more available to you. I do not dispense knowledge. It is you who learn, discern, find knowledge and incorporate it into your life. It is you who will benefit from your efforts or be frustrated in your ignorance. The skills you will develop and use for this class are essential for the rest of your life. The world is changing quite rapidly and the ability to adapt and learn will be the difference between success and significantly less than success (“Would you like fries with that?”)

Course Requirements: This course involves reading, writing, thinking, connecting, presenting, and group discussion. It is fast-paced; you will need to stay on top of all reading and prep work. You will need to put in consistent effort throughout the quarter.

Hybrid – Integrated Journals (25%) This is a writing enhanced course. We will use writing to discover, process, and learn. We will use a variety of different writing including free-writes, summary, analysis, synthesis, reading responses, reflections, critiques, knowledge creating exercises, and research. Most of this writing will be captured in your journals both in and outside of class. Our focus for all writing assignments and discussion will be on critical thinking (exploration, integration, and connecting the dots), metacognition (reflecting on our thinking and writing), quantitative literacy (using and interpreting data in stride).

Annotated Research Scaffold (10%) This assignment will be a scaffolding assignment, meaning that it will flow into your Final Research Prospectus. I am leaving it vague so that we can explore on settle on the best option.

Reading and online Prep Activities (10%) Since the classroom will be an active learning environment, it is essential that you come to class prepared. These readings and online prep work are designed to get you ready for the activities in class.

iClicker GO: Learning Prep (10%) iClicker Prep questions will ensure that everyone is prepared and ready to be successful at the beginning of class.

iClicker GO: Assurance of Learning (10%) iClicker AOL questions will help us work through muddy points in class and make sure you have a good grounding in the material before moving on.

Final Research Prospectus (35%) Since this class will focus on integration, model building, and different modes of thinking, writing and presenting, it only makes sense that your final submission will be a project that integrates all of these elements.

Attendance and Participation (5%) Attendance is mandatory. You should be on time and ready for discussion each day. There’s no such thing as an “excused absence” – you’re either in class, or you’re not.
Disability Resources

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructor to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is housed in Building 124, Room 119, and can be reached at (805) 756-1395.

Grading Schema

- Hybrid/Integrated Journal Writing: (25%)
- Reading & Online Prep: (10%)
- iClicker: Prep Questions: (10%)
- iClicker: Assurance of Learning: (5%)
- Annotated Research Scaffold: (10%)
- Final Research Prospectus: (35%)
- Attendance & Participation: (5%)
- Service Learning: (P/F)

EXCEPTATIONS:

In this course you are expected to:

- Show up to class on a regular basis and be prepared to make a positive contribution to the learning environment.
- Study the assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared to speak to the readings.
- Seek assistance when you need it.
- Begin to formulate your thinking and understanding of the world in terms of economic models, theory, systems and cognitive biases.
- Begin to consider the validity of economic and social science models and theories by examining real world data and trends.

COURSE POLICIES

- All individuals must follow the course policies. There is no special treatment!
- Late assignments are not accepted.
- Missed assignments, posts, or discussions cannot be replaced.
- No laptop computers unless part of the class activity.
- Bring journals to every class.
- Electronics: Please stow your cell phone and other electronic devices unless we are using them for class activity.
- Attendance: Attendance is required for every student.
- Basic Etiquette. Come to class on time. Stay until the end. No talking, no sleeping, no reading. Do not start packing your belongings before class is over; the conclusions of lectures and discussions are often the most important.
- I do not discuss grading via email. Please come to Office Hours if you do not understand the grading criterion used.
- Cheating: It is understood that cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. As per Cal Poly policy (CAM Section 684) “The penalty for cheating requires an “F” course grade and further attendance in the course is prohibited.”

OFFICE HOURS

Tu 2-330 (03-438)
Th 2-330
(03-438 or Online)
Questions on efficiency/effectiveness of your agency to consider:

1. What are the goals of the agency that you have been involved with? What specific variables or factors would you use in measuring the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals? How can the program be improved so that it becomes more effective and efficient?

2. Identify the different population groups who benefit from the program(s) offered by your agency. Are the poor and minorities the only ones who benefit? Based on your experience with this agency do you believe the clients you assisted are deserving of aid? From your perspective, what do you perceive as the main reasons why these clients are poor or in need of aid?

3. How does economics relate to these real world problems? Provide examples of how economic theory is use to analyze the problems that you encountered during your service?

Econ 303 is a service learning course, affording you the opportunity to connect economic theory to everyday realities through your volunteer work with local agencies, as well as apply the knowledge from real world experience to analyses that we address on a more theoretical level.

Service Learning Requirement:
Over the quarter, you are required to:

1. Attend the Agency Fair and sign up with an agency during the 1st class meeting
2. Complete a minimum of 14 hours of service with a local service agency.
3. Attend one 2 hour reflection meeting (during final exam time) where we will discuss and reflect on your service learning experience during the first hour and analyze that experience during the second hour.

In order to receive credit for your SERVICE and the corresponding LEARNING that occurs during that service you must fulfill requirements 1-3 above. There are no make-ups for the reflection meeting. If requirement #2 is incomplete, you will not receive credit for the course.