**WINTER 2023 − ECON 2883 WI01**

**Micro Economic Policy Issues**

**TIME:** Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 to 3:50 pm **CLASSROOM**: BAC364

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. B. VanBlarcom

**OFFICE LOCATION:** BAC342

**OFFICE TEL:** (902) 585 1337

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** brian.vanblarcom@acadiau.ca

**OFFICE HOURS:** By appointment.

**DELIVERY METHOD:** In person

**ACADEMIC CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:**

This course applies basic concepts of economic decision-making to a discussion and analysis of contemporary issues in economics. The course curriculum will cover a wide range of research topics in tourism, environment, finance, and urban issues

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The primary objective of this course is to expose students to research on contemporary economic issues. Moreover, this course will serve as a platform in which faculty showcases their research to students in an accessible fashion while engaging them in discussions around the policy implications of the topics covered.

**COURSE FORMAT:**

This course will be taught collectively by a group of economics faculty, namely Dr. Brian VanBlarcom, Dr. Burc Kayahan, Dr. Andrew Davis and Dr. Justin Beaudoin. Each faculty will take turns in presenting a research question over a three-week period (i.e. six classes). Faculty presentations will loosely follow the format outlined below with variation/emphasis at the discretion of the instructor.

Lecture 1: Introduction of the research question and summary of the literature on a given topic

Lecture 2: An overview of data & research methodology adopted

Lecture 3: Presentation of research findings on the topic

Lecture 4: Class discussion on the topic with a focus on applicable policy implications

Lecture 5: Topic wrap- up and test/paper discussion

Lecture 6: Test Written, take-home test/paper submitted if applicable

**TEXTBOOK:**

There is no assigned textbook for the course since it adopts a seminar style, however, there will be assigned readings (an academic article or chapters from other sources) prior to the presentation for each topic to familiarize students with the subject matter of each presentation.

**TOPICS COVERED IN THE COURSE**

**TOPIC 1:** “Calculating economic value for non - market recreational goods – the travel cost method”

**Presenter:** Dr. Brian VanBlarcom

**Dates:** Tuesday, Jan 10 – Tuesday, Jan 24

The travel-cost method (TCM) is used for calculating economic values of non-market recreational goods. For example, TCM can estimate part of economic benefits of coral reefs, beaches or wetlands stemming from their use for recreational activities (diving and snorkeling/swimming and sunbathing/bird watching). TCM is based on the notion that travel costs represent the price (or a significant part of the price) of access to a recreational site. Peoples’ willingness to pay for visiting a site is thus estimated based on the number of trips that they make at different travel costs. This module reviews the steps involved in using the travel cost method in evaluating the economic value of a recreational resource and examines relevant examples and extensions.

**Guest Lecture:** Former Canadian Federal Finance Minister

**Presenter**: Bill Morneau

**Date**: Lecture will take place on Thursday, January 26 (details TBA)

**TOPIC 2:** "Environmental Inequity and Neighbourhood Characteristics in Ontario, Canada"

**Presenter:** Dr. Burc Kayahan

**Dates:** Tuesday, January 31 – Thursday, February 16

Environmental justice literature in USA shows that low-income and minority neighbourhoods have disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards (siting large industrial facilities and hazardous waste sites, air pollution concentrations, etc.). This topic focuses on measuring the empirical relationship between the pattern of toxic pollutant releases and neighbourhood characteristics in Ontario. In particular, using data from the Canadian Census and the National Pollutant Release Inventory, we will conduct an empirical investigation of environmental inequity in Ontario.

**TOPIC 3:** “How can we use household balance sheets to understand inequality?”

**Presenter:** Dr. Andrew Davis

**Dates:** Tuesday, February 28 – Thursday, March 16

Income and wealth inequality are major current debates, and often characterized by statistics, for example citing what fraction of income or wealth are held by the top 1%. How do we measure income and wealth inequality, and do we agree on how it should be measured? How can we use data on household finances to infer the causes and nature of modern economic inequality? What lessons does this hold for policymakers?”

**TOPIC 4:** "Is Public Transit's 'Green' Reputation Deserved? Evaluating the Effects of Transit Supply on Air Quality"

**Presenter:** Dr. Justin Beaudoin

**Dates:** Tuesday, March 21 to Thursday, April 6

This topic focuses on measuring he effectiveness of investing in public transit as a policy tool to reduce air pollution. We will discuss the ideas of market failure in urban transportation, provide a brief sense of cost-benefit analysis and first-best vs second-best policies, go through the intuition of a theoretical model of how public transit could reduce pollution, and then discuss how I use data to try to answer this question.

**EVALUATION:**

Course evaluation is based on grades awarded for the Topic test (in class/take-home) or paper (80%); as well as Econ 2883 class/Economics Department Seminar participation (10%); and a written assignment (10%) related to the guest lecture by former Canadian Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau (lecture will take place on Thursday, January 26).

**ACCESIBLE LEARNING**

Rooms 111-115, Rhodes Hall, 21 University Ave. accessiblelearning.acadiau.ca

Accessible Learning Services works with students, staff, and faculty to facilitate academic accommodations and services for students with disabilities (permanent and temporary). Accommodations are based on the recommendations that are provided in students’ documentation. Accessible Learning Services also provides supports including academic skill development workshops for students, referrals to on-and-off campus resources, employment-readiness skill development and work placements, and educational awareness training. For more information about Accessible Learning Services’ registration process and support services, please contact one of the staff members listed below or visit our website at <https://www2.acadiau.ca/student-life/accessiblelearning.html>.

Accessible Learning Services Contact Information:

Marissa McIsaac; Manager, accessible.learning@acadiau.ca, 902-585-1290

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Vivian Li; Accessible Learning Support Advisor, vivian.li@acadiau.ca, 902-585-1520

**CLASS PREPARATION:**

Students are expected to attend the classes in a regularly and organized manner. Given the seminar style of the course, it is imperative that students read the assigned articles in a timely manner and participate in class discussions to foster their understanding of the subject matter.

**COURSE WEBSITE:**

The course website will be available via Acadia Courseware & Online Resource Network (ACORN) at <http://acorn.acadiau.ca>. Make sure to check this site every week for course related materials and announcements that will be available as we progress throughout the course.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

It is the responsibility of students to familiarize themselves with the University’s policy on academic integrity (page 40 of the 2022-23 Academic Calendar).

Copying, plagiarism and other academic offences will not be tolerated. It is a serious offence to engage in **academic misconduct.** Penalties are severe and may result in suspension from a program/course and expulsion. A complete list of Academic Regulations can be found on the Policies page of the University’s website.