

Economics 576
Macroeconomic Theory and Policy
Spring 2014 – Online
Syllabus--Preliminary

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Campus/Commerce Office Hours: M & W 9:30 – 11:30 and by appointment

ABOUT THE COURSE - GENERAL FOCUS: Macroeconomics deals with the **aggregate** level of economic activity. Macroeconomic Theory and Policy focuses on several central questions:

- 1) What can we (reasonably) expect of the macroeconomy?
- 2) How do we evaluate performance on the macro level?
- 3) What makes the economy tick (or fail to tick)?
- 4) What happens when the macroeconomy fails to perform up to par?
- 5) Can we/how can we make the economy tick more smoothly?

REQUIRED TEXT: There is not a required text. Required materials will be posted in DocSharing or else a link will be provided. For those who like to have a text for reference purposes I recommend Macroeconomics: Policy and Practice by Frederic Mishkin (Prentice Hall, ISBN-13:9870321436337)

Nature of the Course/Material

Keep in mind that Economics 576 is a graduate level course in aggregate economics. Macroeconomic Principles (or Econ 501) is a prerequisite for Economics 576. Please note that the concept of “prerequisite” is not about a check mark—it has to do with one’s background regarding preparedness to handle the material. You should have a general familiarity with and understanding of, the basic terminology and tools of macroeconomic analysis before you start this course. It is important that you not start the course already behind. In case you have not taken any economics in several years, or if your course in macroeconomics was an institutional/non-analytical course, you may wish to check a modern principles text and/or course syllabus to update yourself on what is included in a macro principles course. Additionally, since macroeconomics is, to a high degree, about relationships between different variables and responses to autonomous changes, shocks and/or policy changes in the economy, we will spend some time on multipliers. Multipliers are about numbers. Consequently, we will use some very elementary algebra to analyze the concept. This certainly will not be more advanced than a high school, first level course in algebra. And while you will not be required to solve algebra problems, you will need to be able to follow and understand material that is algebra based. If you are uncomfortable with the idea that the course will involve some elementary algebra, you may want to review a bit before the course begins.

What to Expect From an Online Class

In at least one important sense online classes are different from face-to-face classes. Online education requires that the student be much more self-directed and work independently. In an online course, the student accepts responsibility for learning outcomes. The instructor’s role is more that of facilitator and

overseer—as opposed to lecturer/presenter. This means that the student who takes such a class must be more disciplined than is normally the case with a face-to-face class. It is imperative that you do the readings, study, turn in assignments and take tests on schedule. **Mark assignments and exam dates on your calendar as soon as they are announced. “Forgetting,” being “out of town” and/or “confused” about the time that an assignment is due or that a test must be taken is not an acceptable excuse for missing it.** If you do not have sufficient time to devote to this class each week, and/or if you are not comfortable with this type of setting, you probably should rethink taking this class in an online format. Keep in mind that Economics 576 is a graduate level economics course, and the performance requirements will be commensurate with same.

Webinars: A Class Live Pro Webinar is scheduled for each Monday from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm, CDT. It is strongly recommended that you participate in these sessions. However, in case you are unable to participate at the scheduled time, the Webinars will be recorded and you can watch/listen at any time after it is completed. In case you do miss a webinar, it is important that you access the recorded session as soon afterward as possible—sooner is preferable to later. The purpose of the Webinars will be to provide perspective relative to the material, to focus on and emphasize major topics and concepts, and to answer questions on the material.

Office Hours: UPON REQUEST (which may be by email or phone—but must be at least 12 hours in advance), I will hold electronic office hours on Wednesdays (1/15/2014 – 4/30/2014) between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm CDT through your e-College site using Class Live Pro. Office hours normally will not be used to cover new material or as a substitute for attending or listening to the Webinars. However, these will provide the opportunity to ask questions about material—either already covered or upcoming. It is recommended that you consult your syllabus and the Course Pages in eCollege to see if your administrative and/or procedural questions/concerns are addressed there. You may e-mail me with questions concerning materials (not addressed in Webinars and/or office hours), and I will respond as promptly as practical. Please allow me up to 24 hours (during the week—not counting weekends) to reply. If you have not received a response within that time frame, please re-send the e-mail **and call my office at 903-886-5675** (leaving a voice mail if not answered).

COURSE GRADE: There will be either three or four components (your choice) to your course grade. First, there will be **two exams**. Exam I, which will cover material assigned for the first half of the term, and will be available for the 72 hour period from *date to be determined, but near half-way through term*. Exam II, which will be comprehensive, will be May 7 to May 9, 2014. The two exams will carry equal weight toward determination of your final course grade.

Second, there will be two **required special projects** in the course. These will involve individually researched and written papers regarding different topics/aspects of the course. You will have approximately one week’s notice before each of these papers is due. Your combined percentage score on these projects will carry the same weight as each exam relative to determining your semester grade.

Third, there will be the opportunity (**and option**) of **writing a term paper** in the course. Generally, term papers must relate to macroeconomic theory and policy (You may wish to consult list of possible topics), should be approximately 10-15 pages in length, and should be well organized, written, edited, and documented. Term papers are due by midnight, Saturday, April 26, 2014—NO EXCEPTIONS. For specifics, including topic suggestions and requirements/expectations, see About Term Papers

Finally, there may be a **bonus** problem or short paper or two or three during the term. If and when these do happen, they will be relatively quick turn-around assignments—due within a week or less. This is one more reason that it is important to access the recorded webinar as soon after the session as possible, in case you miss one. Points earned on bonus assignments will be added to exam scores.

To make an "A" in the course, you must average at least 90% on the exams and on the projects, and turn in an acceptable term paper on an approved topic.

To make a "B" in the course, **either** (1) you must average at least 75% on the exams and on the projects (and you need not write a term paper), **or** (2) you may turn in a term paper, which will carry equal weight with the exams and the projects. Under this second option, the four grades (the two tests, the project percentage grade, and the term paper) must average at least 75%.

To make a "C" in the course, **either** (1) you must average at least 60% on the exams and the projects (and you need not write a term paper), **or** (2) you may write a term paper. Under alternative (2) the exam scores, the projects percentage, and the term paper must average at least 60%.

My “Negative” Note: I do not like to hear graduate students whine. (It makes me crazy.) I prefer to see my students perform. “Need” is not a factor in determining course grades, so please do not call or e-mail me telling me how much you need to make a certain grade. I also do not care what grade you made in all your other courses, nor do I care if you are allowed to work in “teams” in all your other classes and/or if you are awarded “participation” points in other courses. Grades are to be earned, not gifted. If a certain grade in this course is critical to you, you might find it worthwhile to re-read the paragraph above relative to the nature of a summer online course, and read and heed the material below under the heading “Hints for Making a Good Grade in this Course.”

HINTS FOR MAKING A GOOD GRADE IN THIS COURSE

1. Note the prerequisite requirements. If you do not have the background for the course you are unlikely to do well—summers go too fast and online courses put too much responsibility on your own shoulders. If you are a “I don’t do well in economics” student, do NOT take this course online during the summer.
2. Attend the Webinars—come prepared, ask questions if you do not understand the material and/or assignments, stay alert and take good notes. If unable to participate in the actual webinar, access the recorded version as soon afterward as possible.
3. Take advantage of any and all bonus opportunities.
4. Read and study materials when assigned. Falling behind in a summer online class can be fatal (grade-wise, of course). Additionally, Webinar sessions and class assignments make more sense if you come to class prepared
5. Turn in all projects and take exams on time—and in proper form (see below)
6. All assignments--tests and projects--are individual (not group) assignments. Make sure that the materials you submit reflect your (exclusive) work.
7. When you don’t understand material, ASK QUESTIONS—either in the Webinar, by email, phone, or even make an appointment to come by my office. As soon as you realize that you are having problems in the course, contact me then.

Suggestions for submitting written assignments:

1. Save a backup copy when you submit. It may contain material or concepts that you will wish to review for the upcoming exam.
2. Put the assignment in your own words—DO NOT SEND ME ANY CUT AND PASTE ATTACHMENTS. I do not care to read National Bureau of Economic Research generated material about the NBER (relative, for example, to an assignment regarding business cycles). Tell me what **you** have to offer—but stick to facts and analysis, not unsupported opinion.
3. Put the assignment in your own words—DO NOT SEND ME A PAPER THAT IS IDENTICAL TO THAT SUBMITTED BY YOUR FELLOW CLASSMATE. The assignments are not group projects.
4. Treat each submission as a university, graduate level assignment—not a text message to a pal. Keep in mind that in a formal setting:
 - a) grammar and spelling matter (and may be held against you);
 - b) 2 and 4 are Arabic numerals, not prepositions;
 - c) U and R are letters of the alphabet, not pronouns and contractions;
 - d) “there” and “their” are not interchangeable words;

In general, ask yourself if your submission is of a quality and maturity that you would submit to an employer—assuming that you would like to keep your job and advance with the company.