Course Syllabus

Department of Economics
Writing for Economists
ECON 225 A02 (1.5 credits)
July 5, 2017 – August 21, 2017

Instructor: Alan Chaffe
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Office phone: 250-721-8586
E-mail: achaffe@uvic.ca
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday: 10:30–11:30am or by appointment. Additional hours will be announced prior due dates of major assessments
Classroom: Clearihue (CLE) A307
Class Times: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday: 8:30–10:20am

Calendar description:
Extensive practice in written technical and non-technical composition. Basic grammar will be reviewed, including sentence syntax, punctuation, and paragraph construction. Students will be exposed to the correct style for the various documents they are likely to encounter.

Notes:
- A comprehension and writing test will be given in the first seven calendar days of the course. Students who fail the test will be required to see the Economics ECON 225 TA during the term to upgrade their writing skills.
- Students satisfy the ECON 225 course requirement if they have: i) received a minimum grade of B+ in one of ENGL 135, ENGL 146, ENGL 147; or ii) passed ENGR 240.

Prerequisites:
- One of ECON 103, ECON 103C, ECON 180; and
- ECON 104; and
- Academic Writing Requirement satisfied; and
- Declared Honours, Major, General, or Minor in Economics.

Course objective:
Economics 225 is all about writing, research, and communication. The course was developed nine years ago in response to the need for English composition and comprehension skills in the undergraduate Economics program. Economics 225 is geared to a type of writing that combines clear, concise prose with theoretical analysis and the use of economics models. The course content includes the study of basic grammar as well as the writing of summaries, argumentative essays, opinions, and empirical research papers. The topics and course discussions will provide you with a better
understanding of how to write like an economist. Students who complete the course will have learned to communicate clearly, give a presentation, and write with precision.

**Required course textbook:**

There are a variety of textbooks that can provide students with an in-depth understanding of writing like an economist. The textbook that I have chosen for this course is listed below. Students must purchase this textbook from the bookstore and are not permitted to purchase used copies. This is because the textbook serves as a workbook, it is used for tests and quizzes, and there is a section on plagiarism which requires your signature and that you are to submit with your final paper. In addition, profits from the book go back to UVic students in the form of scholarships. I will make use of additional articles and research papers to supplement this textbook in order to further enhance your practical understanding of writing for economics. In addition to the textbook, you will also want to purchase a standard college-level English dictionary.


**Recommended course textbook:**

This course will make use of the APA (American Psychological Association) style, which is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. There are many books on APA, however, a convenient and concise set of rules can be found in the following textbook:


**Learning outcomes:**

By taking this course, you will be able to:

1. Prepare outlines and drafts of essays, and incorporate standard organizational styles and methods of citation in economics;
2. Edit essays for correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction;
3. Write essays and opinion pieces that incorporate the presentation of information concisely, clearly, and correctly;
4. Extract the key economic argument(s) from an article or body of literature, and write a summary of an article, movie, or body of literature;
5. Write a correct abstract, paraphrase, and literature review; and
6. Write an empirical research essay in economics and organize numerical information in tables and figures to support written arguments simply, briefly, and clearly.

**Course goals:**

In addition to the learning outcomes, by taking this course you will have the opportunity to:

7. Practice your oral communication skills; and
8. Learn from your fellow colleagues (*i.e.*, classmates).
Assessment summary:

- Diagnostics summary
- Quizzes (5 x 5%) 25%
- Argument essay (2 x 10%) 20%
- Grammar test 10%
- Annotated bibliography 10%
- Presentation 5%
- Research paper 30%

Undergraduate grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passing Grades</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minimum of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
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Failing Grades | Description |

| Numerical score (%) and grade point value equivalencies: |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>A+</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
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Diagnostic Summary:

Provide a 200- to 250-word summary, in class, of a reading to be announced. The reading will be from one of the essays in the Writing for Economics textbook. Note that the summaries that you write in Econ 225 must not contain any quoted material. They must not contain any exact language from the source except, if needed, keywords, technical terms, numbers, or proper nouns. The summary serves as a diagnostic indicator and will be graded as Pass or Fail. Students with marginal performance on the first summary test should revise the summary with the TA in preparation for the mid-term summary test. The diagnostics summary test will be held on July 7th in class.
**Quizzes:**
There will be five quizzes over the course of the term, each worth 5% of your final grade. The quizzes will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the material discussed during the course. The topics covered on each quiz will be announced in class.

**Argument Essay:**
Students will be asked to write, in class, two classical essays of argument of approximately 400 words. These argument essays serve as your midterm and final examination for this course. The first argument essay will be in class on **July 28th**. The second argument essay will be in class on **August 18th**. If you miss either of the examinations, you are required to provide a doctor’s note. I will set a new date for students who miss an examination and have a doctor’s note.

**Grammar Test**
There will be an in-class grammar test based on grammar lectures and the OWL website: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/. The test is scheduled for **August 2nd**.

**Annotated Bibliography:**
This assignment will allow you to demonstrate your skills in summarizing research articles through the compilation of an annotated bibliography. Each entry should provide the following:

- A brief (150-200 word) summary of the reading;
- Two or three salient quotes from the reading of no more than five sentences each (with page references);
- A short (150-250 word) reflection on the article: What did you learn? How is this article useful for your research paper? What questions are you left with after reading the article? What did you, or did you not, agree with?

An example of an annotated bibliography will be provided on Course Spaces. A minimum of three entries are required and one of the articles must be a peer reviewed research article. This assignment will be useful for completing your research paper and is **due at the start of class on August 2nd**.

**Presentation:**
Each student will provide a brief presentation (of approximately eight minutes) to the class on their research paper. Students will sign-up for their presentation during week three of the term. Presentations will take place on **August 9th, 15th, and 16th**.

**Research Paper:**
Each student will write a 1,000-word empirical research essay in APA style. At the start of week three, students will be asked to define the purpose of their research paper and provide a minimum of three sources related to the topic. Students must have a minimum of one scholarly peer-reviewed source. Students must clear their topic with me before starting their paper. A detailed marking rubric will be provided to students along with past topics and other research topics that may be of interest to you.

**Please note:** As part of the marking rubric, students must complete the following:

1. Participate in the library class;
2. Participate in the two peer review editing classes, which includes bringing three copies of their paper to the classes;
3. Attach the signed plagiarism document (page 231-232 of textbook) to your essay; and
4. Hand in the two draft copies with your final essay.
Students will have five marks deducted from their score on the final essay paper for each of the above components not completed. The sample research paper in Appendix K is an excellent resource for your final paper. The research paper is due at the start of class on August 11th.

**Technology requirements:**

You will have to register to have access to our Course Spaces (http://coursespaces.uvic.ca/) site, as I will be posting all course materials to this site. Course Spaces is an e-learning platform that will allow us to interact and collaborate over the course of the semester. If you need help setting up your Course Spaces account you can find detailed instructions on how to set-up your account and navigate the site at: http://coursespaces.uvic.ca/help/students/index.php. Please also feel free to ask me if you need further help. The earlier you register for Course Spaces the better, as I will regularly post relevant resources and course material to this site.

**Course experience survey (CES)**

The university uses an online survey for course evaluations. I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of the term, as in all other courses, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the Department of Economics improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information closer to the time that it is to be completed, but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

**Course policies:**

- According to the University of Victoria Calendar (http://web.uvic.ca/calendar), "A student may not attempt a course a third time without the prior approval of the Dean of the Faculty and the Chair of the Department in which the course is offered unless the calendar course entry states that the course may be repeated for additional credit. A student who has not received this approval may be deregistered from the course at any point and may be asked to withdraw from his or her declared or intended program." In order to request permission to attempt this course for the third time, you must follow the instructions provided under the link Repeating Courses at http://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/economics/undergraduate/home/course%20policies/index.php. Failure to obtain permission will result in deregistration from the course.

- The best way for you to learn the material and succeed in this course is to (i) attend each class having read the material for that lecture, (ii) actively participate in the class by taking part in classroom discussion and activities, (iii) study and review the material in the textbook, (iv) complete all course assessments, (v) review the posted solutions for quizzes and examinations, and (vi) ask questions in class, after class during office hours, by e-mail, through Course Spaces, or by arranging a meeting with me outside of office hours.

- I will post additional required readings on the Course Spaces site. You should visit this site regularly to stay up-to-date.

- I encourage you to post questions regarding course material to the Course Spaces site to initiate discussion.

- To fully benefit from the course, I encourage you to actively participate in lectures. Active participation in the class involves participating in classroom discussions and activities, asking questions, and taking notes on pertinent material. Doing so will help you achieve greater success in the course.
• In fairness to your fellow classmates who submit their work on time, I will deduct 15% per day for late assignments for a maximum of three days. After three days, I will not accept the assignment unless you provide a formal doctor’s note. The three-day maximum will allow me to provide feedback and post assignment solutions in a timely manner.

• I take cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct very seriously. You are permitted and encouraged to work in groups and provide feedback to one another on assessments, and particularly your research paper, but you are required to submit original work. Original work is work not received from others, copied, nor based on the work of others. For further information on the University’s plagiarism policy please visit: http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php.

• This course takes violations of Academic Integrity very seriously. If a final research paper is found to contain plagiarism, it will receive a zero. Students in ECON 225 are required to tear out the page on plagiarism: Appendix J (pp. 231-232). Students print and sign their name, and write the date. They must staple this section to the front of their final paper before handing it in.

• Academic Integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students are expected to observe the same standards of scholarly integrity as their academic and professional counterparts. A student who is found to have engaged in unethical academic behaviour, including the practices described in the Policy on Academic Integrity (http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2014-09/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html) in the University Calendar, is subject to consequence by the University.

• I expect you to embrace a learning community that respects diversity and promotes a positive, inclusive, and safe space for all students. We are all here to learn and should have equal opportunities to do so.

• The University is an equal opportunity university. Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you encounter barriers to academic goals that may require academic accommodations, please feel free to approach me and register with the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability (RCSD) as soon as possible. The RCSD staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. For further information on the wonderful services provided by the Centre please visit: www.uvic.ca/services/rcsd/. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

• As do I, the University has a strong commitment to student learning, as well as social, personal, and ethical development. As such, the University offers a wide range of personal, learning, career counseling services (e.g., depression, self-esteem, loss and grief support, stress, anxiety, speaking publicly, thinking critically, making and using notes, and career advice), and resources to students. Please visit: www.coun.uvic.ca for further information.

• There is no such thing as a stupid question! All questions are welcomed in and out of the class. You should make use of my office hours and are free to set up appointments with me for individual or group sessions in order to ask questions, review course material, or to speak about research topics. If you find that you are struggling with the course material, please see me as early as possible so that we can work to resolve this. I am here to work with you and to help you succeed.

• The University does set out other course policies that we must follow, and these can be found at: http://www.uvic.ca/science/math-statistics/undergraduate/course-policies/index.php/23-course-policies/675-important-course-policy-information.

• The Department of Economics also sets course policies that we must follow, and these can be found at: http://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/economics/undergraduate/home/courses/course-policies.php.

• In the first class, we will develop community standards (i.e., classroom etiquette) for our learning environment (community-learning standards). You should uphold these community-learning standards and the requirements stated above. I will ask you to sign a course agreement indicating
that you agree with and understand the course requirements and community learning standards. This course agreement should be submitted at the start of the second class, and I will also sign it.

**Ready, set...let’s go:**

I will be relying heavily on current and recent economic events to teach you the best practices and concepts of writing for economics. Together, we will discover the topics and as we proceed. I will make use of various videos, case studies, and news stories relevant to the topics. I will update the course outline with this material as we move through the course together.

If you do not learn a lot about writing, or do not find this course interesting or enjoyable, then I am not doing my job. I love teaching, and I consider it my responsibility to help you succeed. As we move together as an organic learning community, we must work together. If you have questions in lecture, ask them. If you see media stories or find videos related to the course material, please send them to me so that they can be shared. If you have suggestions for improving the course, please let me know. As in any university course, what you get out of this course will depend on what you put into it. Together, let’s create a community-learning environment where we all succeed!

“There is no such thing as a free lunch” (Milton Friedman).

“In the long-run, we are all dead” (John Maynard Keynes).

The most obvious things are often right there, but you don’t think about them because you’ve narrowed your vision” (Steven Levitt).

“The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones” (John Maynard Keynes).

“Data, I think, is one of the most powerful mechanisms for telling stories. I take a huge pile of data and I try to get it to tell stories” (Steven Levitt).
## Tentative course structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Activities and Readings(^1,^2)</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>July 5</td>
<td>Introduction and course overview; and Appendix A: The Summary</td>
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<td>July 7</td>
<td>Appendix D: Basic Sentence Patterns</td>
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<td>July 11</td>
<td>Grammar lecture on common writing problems: <a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/</a>; and writing activity based on Section 1: Education, pp. 3-18</td>
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<td>July 12</td>
<td>Library class: Conducting research; and Appendix F: Academic Research Guide</td>
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<td>July 14</td>
<td>Appendix B: The Argument, the sentence, &amp; the basics; and activity on topic selection for research paper</td>
<td>Quiz #1</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>July 18</td>
<td>Appendix E: Writing a research paper in economics; handout, “The Purpose Statement,” on Course Spaces; and an activity on statement of purpose</td>
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<td>July 19</td>
<td>Section 2: Movies, pp. 37-52; and Appendix M: Argument Outline</td>
<td>Quiz #2</td>
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<td>July 21</td>
<td>Appendix G: Tables and Figures; Appendix I: APA Style Guide; and additional notes on APA that I will provide in class</td>
<td>Grammar test</td>
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<td>July 25</td>
<td>Section 3: Game Theory, pp. 79-86 and 95-100; and activity on annotated bibliography</td>
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<td>July 26</td>
<td>Section 4: Asia, pp. 105-112; 119-126; and 135-142; and review for argument essay midterm</td>
<td>Quiz 3</td>
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<td>July 28</td>
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<td>Argument essay midterm</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>Appendix H: In-class presentations; and handout, “Giving Talks,” on course spaces</td>
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<td>August 2</td>
<td>Appendix C: Editing Symbols; and Section 5: Equity, pp. 145-152; 163-170; and 171-178</td>
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<td>August 4</td>
<td>Peer editing round 1</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>August 8</td>
<td>Peer editing round 2</td>
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<td>Appendix N: Guidelines for Writing an Honours Thesis; and research presentations</td>
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<td>August 11</td>
<td>Research presentations</td>
<td>Final research paper due</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>August 15</td>
<td>Research presentations</td>
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<td>August 16</td>
<td>Research presentations and class wrap-up</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>August 18</td>
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<td>Argument essay examination</td>
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Supplementary resources:

There is a wide array of materials available for this class. The following serve as examples of other materials you can access.

Books:
- Fault lines: How hidden factures still threaten the world economy, by Raghuram G. Rajan, 2010
- Freakonomics: A rogue economist explains the hidden side of everything, by Steven D. Levitt & Stephen J. Dubner, 2010
- Naked economics—Undressing the dismal science, by Charles Wheelan, 2003
- A guide for the young economist, by William Thompson, 2011
- Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, by John Creswell, 2009

Newspapers:
- The Economist (http://www.economist.com)
- BBC economic section (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business/economy/)
- The Financial Times (http://www.ft.com/home/us)
- The Globe and Mail economic section (http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/)
- Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/economy/)

Blogs and other Internet resources:
- The Daily, Statistics Canada (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dai-quo/)
- The Bank of Canada (http://www.bankofcanada.ca/)
- Freakonomics blog (http://freakonomics.com/blog/)
- TED talks on economics (http://www.ted.com/topics/economics)
- Bloomberg (http://www.bloomberg.com)
- Malcolm Gladwell’s Blog (http://gladwell.com)
- Freakonomics podcast (http://freakonomics.com/radio/freakonomics-radio-podcast-archive/)
- Movies for Economists (http://www.moviesforecon.com/table.htm)
- Democracy Now! (http://www.democracynow.org)
- Nation of Change (http://www.nationofchange.org)
- Econbrowser: An Analysis of current economic conditions and policy (http://econbrowser.com)
- The Conference Board of Canada (http://www.conferenceboard.ca)
- C.D. Howe Institute (http://www.cdhowe.org)
- Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (https://www.asiapacific.ca)
- More or Less, BBC, Tim Harford (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qshd; http://timharford.com/more-or-less/)

"Educate yourself as much as you can with life. Just go out there" (Julian Morris)
**Course agreement:**

I, __________________________________________ have read the course outline and understand the
(Student Name)
course requirements stated in the course outline and the community-learning standards that we
established during the first class (see Course Spaces site for the list of community-learning standards
developed by the class).

__________________________________________________________  ________________________________
(Student Signature)  (Date)

*Please sign and submit this at the beginning of the second class.*

*I will also be signing this agreement ☺*

**Welcome to our learning community!**