EAS 677.022: Economics and Environmental Justice

Fall 2018 A Course Syllabus
(Version: September 21st, 2018)

Logistics

Lecture: W 9:30-11:20 a.m. (credit hours: 1), Dana 2560
Professor: Samuel Stolper (sstolper@umich.edu)
Website: https://umich.instructure.com/courses/258789
Office Hours: By appointment, Dana 3006
Prerequisites: None

About this course

What role does economics play in environmental, energy, and climate justice? What role could it play? This half-semester seminar is meant to be a group exploration of these questions. Economists and economic logic are very often a part of important policymaking – including regulation of the natural environment – that has great consequences for justice. It is therefore vital that we understand economic valuation, what outcomes economics predicts in an unequal world, and how it can be used to inform questions of justice. In seven two-hour class meetings, we will do exactly that.

Inclusive, open-minded discussion will be the top priority in class meetings; lecture will be used to clarify economics concepts and inform our discussion. Seminar grades will be determined by in-class participation and two written assignments (an op-ed and a 2-3 page persuasive essay).

My teaching goals are as follows:

1. Shine a light on how economic evaluation treats – and, variously, harms and helps – justice
2. Train students to think and argue using economic logic and tools
3. Identify uses of economics that can promote justice in environmental outcomes and policy
Assignments

Readings

For most classes, you will be assigned readings from some combination of academic books and journals, blogs, and popular media. The reading load is purposefully modest; I want everybody to complete the readings and be prepared to discuss them. If you are interested in further reading related to course topics, let me know and I will be happy to suggest other sources. I have attempted to choose readings from authors of diverse identities; I encourage feedback on representation in this course.

Participation

In-class participation is a significant part of your final grade. This should not intimidate you; the course will be more fun and more valuable if we all share our perspectives, our questions, our ideas.

Writing

Writing is an extremely important professional skill that is often under-emphasized in quantitative disciplines like economics. In this course, you will have two assignments in which to practice your communication skills: an op-ed to your local newspaper; and a 2-3 page essay. Both exercises will require you to use economics in the formulation of an argument about environmental justice. Each one will give you practice targeting a different audience and in a different writing format. Don’t let the short formats fool you – they will put a spotlight on your argument and challenge your ability to be clear, compelling, and convincing.

Grading

The distribution of course grades will resemble that of other SEAS courses. The weight of each assignment is as follows:

- Class participation: 50%
- Op-ed: 20%
- Paper: 30%

Late (unexcused) assignments will be penalized 10 percentage-points per day (calendar date). Please notify me as soon as possible of any excused absences.
Other course policies

Laptops and phones: Neither laptops nor phones are allowed in class. They would inevitably draw your attention away from class lecture and discussion.

Correspondence: I will try to get back to your emails within 24 hours. Please note EAS 677 in your subject line. If you plan on asking multiple involved questions, please come to office hours or schedule a meeting.

Homework submission: Written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Please submit your work via the homework section of the Canvas course website.

Grade grievances: You must submit requests for a re-grade within one week of receiving the original grade. You must also attach the original graded item and provide a clear written explanation of what you would like to be re-evaluated and why. Your adjusted grade may be higher or lower than the original.

Work ethic: Do not plagiarize. If you paraphrase or copy work that is not your own, you must reference that work. The risk of plagiarizing is not worth the reward. More generally, cheating and academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Any student found to have cheated or behaved unethically or dishonestly will be given a zero on the assignment or exam involved and referred to the appropriate disciplinary committees at U of M.

Course calendar

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Why take this course?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Economics and valuation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Causes of environmental injustice</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Resolving environmental injustice</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Measuring distributive justice</td>
<td>Op-ed due</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The market and its limits</td>
<td>Paper due</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Debrief</td>
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Detailed course schedule

Class #1 – September 5th. Introduction: Why take this course?

Class #2 – September 12th. Economics and valuation

Readings


Class #3 – September 19th. Causes of environmental injustice

Readings


Class #4 – September 26th. Resolving environmental injustice

Readings

Class #5 – October 3rd. Measuring distributive justice

Readings


Assignments

1. Op-ed due

Class #6 – October 10th. The market and its limits

Readings


Class #7 – October 17th. Debrief

Readings


Assignments

1. Paper due