



## Department of Economics Course Outline

**Term:** Fall 2004

**Course:** Economics 349  
[The Economics of Social Problems]

**Section:** 01

**Time:** MWF 12:00-12:50

**Place:** ST 132

**Instructor:** Dr. Robert J. Oxoby

**Office:** SS 444

**Telephone:** (403) 220-2586

**Office Hours:** MW 13:00-14:00 and by appointment.  
(These hours are subject to change.)

**E-Mail:** [oxoby@ucalgary.ca](mailto:oxoby@ucalgary.ca)

### Textbook(s):

A list of readings will be provided as part of a detailed course outline. A packet of these readings will be made available for sale to students through the Department of Economics General Office (SS 454). Some of the readings can be downloaded from the class web page.

Sharpe, et al, *Economics of Social Issues*, McGraw Hill Ryerson **[Recommended Text]**

### Book(s) on Reserve:

Schiller, *Economics of Poverty and Discrimination*, Prentice Hall

Miller, Benjamin and North, *The Economics of Public Issues*, Norton, 2001

Sharp, et al., *Economics of Social Issues*, Irwin/McGraw Hill, latest edition

Becker & Becker, *The Economics of Life*, McGraw Hill

Lowenstein & Elster, *Choice over Time*, Sage, 1992

Aaron, *Behavioral Dimension of Retirement Economics*, Russell Sage, 2000

Elster, *Addiction: Entries & Exits*, Russell Sage

Blau et al, *Economics of Women, Men & Work*, Prentice Hall

Frank, *Economics & Behavior*, McGraw Hill

### Blackboard:

This course will make use of Blackboard. Students who are registered in the course can log on at <http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/webapps/login>

### **Course Outline:**

This course will use the tools of economic analysis to contribute to our knowledge of various social problems. Using the economic model of the rational agent, we will explore how individuals behave in social context and evaluate policies addressing the issues in question. Topics to be covered include discrimination, crime, health care, income inequality, and poverty.

The following is a tentative list of the topics (and readings) we will be discussing. This is only a tentative schedule. If there are any topics you would like to see covered, please let me know.

1. Review of Economic Principles
2. The Income Distribution
3. Poverty
4. Discrimination
5. Crime and Punishment
6. Drugs and Addiction
7. The Environment
8. Aging, Health Care, and Pensions

### **Grade Determination and Final Examination Details:**

Final grades will be based on a midterm exam (30%, date to be announced), a final exam (35%, date set by the Registrar's office), problem sets (10%), and a term paper (25%). Late work will not be accepted.

Several problem sets will be assigned throughout the term, involving the analysis of a specific problem using the methods developed in class. You are encouraged to work together on these problem sets, although each person must turn in their own assignment. Assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Assignments will be collected in class and late assignments will not be accepted. I strongly recommend that you take the time to work through and understand the problem sets. Exams will be of a similar nature and, as such, the problem sets give you an opportunity to practice.

A term paper will comprise 25% of your final grade. You should choose a social problem of interest and analyze it using the tools discussed in class. All topics must be cleared with me by submitting a one page summary of your intended paper topic, listing at least two references you have consulted. If you find yourself having difficulty choosing a topic, please come by and we can find one of interest. The final draft must be typed, double-spaced, and include a list of your references. Due dates for the summary and final draft of the paper will be announced in class. Please feel free to meet with me to discuss the progress of your paper.

Tests and final exams are marked on a numerical (percentage) basis, and then converted to letter grades. The course grade is then calculated using the weights indicated above. As a guide to determining standing, these letter grade equivalences will generally apply:

A+	95-100	B	75-79	C-	55-59
A	90-94	B-	70-74	D+	50-54

A-	85-89	C+	65-69	D	45-49
B+	80-84	C	60-64	F	0-44

If, for some reason, the distribution of grades determined using the aforementioned conversion chart appears to be abnormal the instructor reserves the right to change the grade conversion chart if the instructor, *at the instructor's discretion*, feels it is necessary to more fairly represent student achievement.

A passing grade on any particular component of the course is not required for a student to pass the course as a whole.

Non-programmable calculators will be allowed during the writing of tests or final examinations.

There will be a Registrar scheduled final examination, lasting 2 hours, in a classroom.

Tests and exams WILL NOT involve multiple choice questions.

Students? Union Vice President Academic:

Laura Schultz

Phone: 220-3911

E-mail [kuvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:kuvpaca@ucalgary.ca)

Students? Union Faculty Representative (Social Sciences)

Carina McDonald

Phone: 220-3913 Office: MSC 251

E-mail [socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca)

Society of Undergraduates in Economics (S.U.E.)

E-mail [socuecon@ucalgary.ca](mailto:socuecon@ucalgary.ca)

### Notes:

- Students seeking reappraisal of a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, etc.) should discuss their work with the Instructor within two week of the work being returned to the class.

Safewalk / Campus Security: 220-5333

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RJO:dm

2004-06-23