



SACRAMENTO  
STATE

## Departmental Assessment Plan

Department of  
Economics

*posted:* Fall 2006

**A. Goals and Objectives of the B.A. Program**

The Bachelor of Arts Program in Economics seeks to help its major students to be successful in their vocational pursuits, participate as useful members of society, and enjoy rewarding personal lives. To fulfill this basic mission, the following goals and corresponding objectives have been adopted for the Program:

**Table 1: Goals and Objectives of the Economics B.A. Program**

<b>Program Goals</b>	<b>Learning Objectives/Outcomes</b>
1. Develop the ability to explain core economic terms, concepts, and theories	1.1 Explain the function of markets and prices as allocative mechanisms
	1.2 Apply the concept of equilibrium to both microeconomics and macroeconomics
	1.3 Identify key macroeconomic indicators and measures of economic change, growth, and development
	1.4 Identify and explain the key concepts underlying comparative advantage
	1.5 Identify and explain major types of market failures
2. Demonstrate the ability to employ the “economic way of thinking”	2.1 Explain the application of marginal analysis
	2.2 Explain the use of benefit/cost analysis
	2.3 Explain the contribution of economics to non-market social issues
3. Demonstrate awareness of global, historical, and institutional forces	3.1 Assess the role of domestic and international institutions and norms in shaping economic outcomes
4. Apply economic theories and concepts to contemporary social issues, as well as formulation and analysis of policy	4.1 Describe how economic trade-offs and social values impact public/private policy, and the success or failure of policies to achieve intended outcomes
5. Recognize the role of ethical values in economic decisions	5.1 Distinguish between normative and positive economics
	5.2 Identify the limits of economic analysis
	5.3 Distinguish between efficiency and equity
6. Apply both oral and written communications skills within the discipline	6.1 Present economic arguments in non-quantitative terms
	6.2 Synthesize and summarize the arguments found in both academic and popular economic media
	6.3 Discuss economic concepts in an articulate manner in a classroom or seminar setting
7. Demonstrate quantitative reasoning skills	7.1 Present an economic argument in quantitative terms
	7.2 Demonstrate ability to solve systems of equations
	7.3 Be able to conduct economic analysis using equations and graphs

8. Demonstrate the ability to collect, process, and interpret data, including statistical inference	8.1 Recognize how to use the scientific method in economics
	8.2 Formulate empirically testable hypotheses
	8.3 Identify sources of data to conduct economic analysis
	8.4 Calculate, present, and discuss descriptive statistics
	8.5 Conduct a statistical analysis
	8.6 Critically assess the statistical analysis of other researchers.
9. Demonstrate computer proficiency within economics	9.1 Use electronic databases
	9.2 Use standard software packages
10. Be able to use critical thinking skills within the discipline of economics and about economic matters	10.1 Present viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on economic issues
	10.2 Recognize underlying assumptions in economic models
	10.3 Demonstrate ability to use the economic tools of analysis

These learning objectives/outcomes are addressed in most of the courses in our curriculum. Table 2 provides the curricular connections to program goals and objectives.

**Table 2**  
**Program Outcome Assessment::**  
**Curricular Connections to Program Objectives and Outcomes**

Program Outcome	Economics Required (Core) Courses				Economics Elective Courses					
	1A 1B	100A 100B	101 113	145	141	120, 123, 162, 150	110, 114, 130, 132, 180	160, 170, 135	190, 192, 193	181 184 112
1.1	X	X				X	X	X	X	
1.2	X	X				X	X	X	X	
1.3	X	X	X				X	X	X	
1.4	X								X	
1.5	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
2.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.2	X	X		X		X	X			
2.3	X		X			X	X			X
3.1	X		X	X			X		X	X
4.1	X	X		X		X	X	X		X
5.1	X	X	X							X
5.2	X	X		X		X	X		X	X
5.3	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
6.1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
6.2	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
6.3				X						
7.1				X	X		X			
7.2		X			X					
7.3	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
8.1				X						
8.2				X						
8.3				X	X					
8.4				X	X		X			
8.5				X	X					

8.6				X	X	X	X	X	X	
9.1	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
9.2	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
10.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## **Measuring progress toward desired outcomes**

The Department of Economics uses a capstone course, Econ 145: Research Methods in Economics, to assess whether stated learning objectives are met by the program. This course is taken by majors during their senior year. In this course each student must design and carry out a research project. They must submit a project proposal that includes a statement of the problem to be examined, a review of literature relevant to the problem, and a well defined hypotheses and conceptual framework focusing on the hypothesis to be tested. In addition, students must collect and analyze data, and reach conclusions concerning the data. Each student is required to make an oral presentation of their project to other students and faculty in the Department. The research projects are judged by faculty using an assessment rubric that has been developed for this purpose (see attached). To successfully complete the capstone course and a research project, the student is expected to master all of the skills found in the learning objectives of the Department (Table 1).

The main advantages to the use of Econ 145 for assessment purposes include:

1. Assessment results can provide answers to questions that are relevant to the department such as:
  - a. Do our graduates perform at a reasonable level consistent with both Department goals and outcomes?
  - b. Are concepts and skills learned in other courses applied in the Econ 145 research projects?
  - c. Are there clear shortcomings in skills or concepts that might lead to a review of our expectations, course content, and/or major curriculum changes?
2. Availability of resources devoted to assessment  
A capstone course allows assessment to be carried out in a specific location. In most cases, Econ 145 is taken in the final year of the program so that faculty members can analyze the cumulative learning of students in the B.A. program. The use of Econ 145 is cost-effective in terms of both money and time, since assessment is done once at the end of the semester for all senior economics majors.
3. Use of results to improve course content and the curriculum in general:  
The results from our general evaluation in Econ 145 can be used for formative assessment and program improvement. Formative assessment is designed to give feedback to improve what is being evaluated. In other words, results can be useful in responding to some of the questions raised in (1). In addition, results can prove invaluable to individual faculty. They might be more aware of how their course(s) contributes to the entire B.A. program. They may also choose to make changes in their course objectives or course content to improve on skills and concepts learned by students before taking Econ 145. Similarly, sharing results with students who have yet to take Econ 145 might stimulate them to do more if they understand what is expected of them. Finally, assessment results might persuade most faculty members to structure their courses around agreed-

upon learning objectives or make curriculum changes without impinging on individual faculty freedom and flexibility in designing their courses.

## **Assessment Method in Econ 145**

### **Preparation**

The Economics Department's capstone course, Econ 145, is likely to be taught by different faculty members in different semesters. Such recognition means that the department cannot prescribe in detail either the content of the course or activities related to the course. A collegial process requires that there exist respect for differences in teaching style and course activities as long as stated learning objectives are met and all faculty use a common assessment rubric. Econ 145 projects are likely to reflect differences in style, activities and perhaps ideology. However, there are general components of projects that can be required and evaluated without violating any instructor's academic freedom. In general, the projects should contain the following elements:

1. Exploration of a suitable topic in economics chosen in consultation with the instructor including a definition of the project thesis and a relevant working hypothesis
2. Identification of relevant literature as part of the research project
3. Identification of data sources necessary to carry out the project and a description and evaluation of specific techniques to be used
4. Descriptive and/or inferential statistical analysis of the data to assess the plausibility of the hypothesis
5. Evaluation and interpretation of results and major conclusions from the study
6. Identification of any problems encountered in carrying out the project
7. Proposals for future studies that improve or extend the project

### **Presentation**

Econ 145 instructors will arrange sufficient time for Econ 145 students to present their projects to fellow students and faculty. Presentations may or may not be part of course grade determination. All students will be expected to include the following components in their presentations:

1. The written research project will provide the basis for the oral presentation. The student's presentation shall have a title, abstract, introduction, brief literature survey, and sections describing the methods, data, results, and conclusions.
2. Students may use audio-visual aids of their choice (e.g. power point slides) plus supplementary handouts they deem appropriate to achieve a clear and brief presentation.
3. Students may use written notes of main concepts and points to be emphasized in their presentation.
4. Students should speak clearly and slowly and yet be able to remain within the specified time limit.
5. Students should invite questions at the end of the presentation, which should include a review, and emphasis of the main points and conclusions of the project.

### **Assessment Rubric**

The Economics Department has developed a rubric to measure learning outcomes in the capstone course. The Assessment Committee and other interested faculty will attend the oral presentations and will evaluate each student's project in five categories and provide a score for each category. The five outcome categories broadly reflect the department's basic program goals and objectives for the B.A. program. Each category is to be assigned a score of 1, 2, or 3 as described and the sum over all five categories will determine the overall score or grade. The maximum score that a project can obtain is 15 while the minimum score would be five. At least three faculty members must score each student, and the average score is used to determine the grade as follows:

<b>Scores</b>	<b>Grade</b>
13-15	A
11-12	B
8 -10	C
8 - 9	D
5 -7	F

## ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Assessment Goals/Objectives	Points
<p><b>1. Understand and apply economic concepts and theories (Goal 1))</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does not understand nor apply economic concepts; is confused</li> <li>2. Describes economic concepts, but does not clearly understand or apply them</li> <li>3. Understands and applies economic concepts and theories in a clear and effective manner</li> </ol>	
<p><b>2. Think critically and solve problems (Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 10)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does not identify question at hand, and fails to think critically and solve problems</li> <li>2. Identifies question at hand, but fails to think critically and solve problems</li> <li>3. Identifies question at hand, thinks critically and solves problems in an illuminating way</li> </ol>	
<p><b>3. Utilize mathematics and statistics to facilitate the understanding of economic data (Goal 7)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does not cite nor utilize sufficient (or any) mathematics or statistics regarding the topic/issue</li> <li>2. Cites and utilizes mathematics or statistics that are of limited value or cites but does not utilize</li> <li>3. Cites and utilizes mathematics or statistics, and brings them to bear on the issue/topic at hand</li> </ol>	
<p><b>4. Utilize computers and other technologies to access, retrieve, and analyze data (Goals 8 &amp; 9)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does not identify a primary data source, or cites an inappropriate source</li> <li>2. Cites an appropriate primary data source, but merely repeats the information, does not analyze it</li> <li>3. Cites an appropriate data source, presents and engages the information, examines and assesses it</li> </ol>	
<p><b>5. Communicate your findings both orally and in writing (Goal 6)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fails to orally communicate findings in a meaningful way and/or fails to communicate findings in writing</li> <li>2. Communicates findings orally, but fails to stimulate interest from audience and/or communicates findings in writing in an unclear manner</li> <li>3. Clearly communicates findings orally and stimulates interest and discussion from the audience and communicates findings in writing in a clear and stimulating manner</li> </ol>	

### **Additional Assessment Tools**

There are two additional methods of outcome assessment that the department uses:

- Economics Graduating Senior Exit Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 17 questions calling for scaled responses and 8 open-ended questions. The questions seek student assessment of the contribution of the Department's faculty and its B.A. program curriculum to the achievement of the program's goals and objectives. (See attached)
- Economics Alumni Questionnaire. The Office of Institutional Studies carries out a survey of the department's alumni every six years. In the past, survey questions have been supplemented by 10 departmentally-devised questions.

# **EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADUATING SENIORS IN ECONOMICS**

The faculty of the Department of Economics is interested in learning about your experience as a major in our department. This questionnaire is part of our BA Program assessment effort. Your input will help us to develop curriculum, improve the quality of instruction, and provide academic and career advice to majors. We would greatly appreciate your assistance in these endeavors by completing this questionnaire and returning it to the Economics Department. You are not asked to reveal your identity. Thank you.

## **PART I**

Please respond to the following questions based on your experience in general as a major in economics rather than your experience in any particular class.

Use the following response scale in answering questions 1-16:

**A. Usually   B. Sometimes   C. Rarely   D. Never   E. Not Applicable**

1. My economics courses required me to use and to develop my communications skills.
2. Courses offered opportunities for problem solving and critical thinking rather than just content acquisition.
3. Courses emphasized the connections among theory, critical thinking, and the real world.
4. Courses helped me to connect the course content to relevant questions for me and for society.
5. Courses encouraged me to explore questions of values and ethics related to economics.
6. Advanced courses required me to use and build upon information I acquired in previous courses.
7. Courses developed my ability to understand and use economic vocabulary, to communicate economics by means of diagrams, graphs, and other mathematical devices, and to communicate this understanding to others.
8. The major program afforded opportunities to practice and develop writing skills.

9. The major program afforded opportunities to practice and develop computer skills.
10. The major program afforded opportunities to practice and develop oral communications skills.
11. The major program afforded opportunities to practice and develop analytic skills.
12. The major program trained me to design and carry out research: forming hypotheses, testing hypotheses with data, and deriving results.
13. The feedback I received from my economics instructors on exams, papers, and other assignments helped me to improve my performance in my classes.
14. During my major career, semester to semester, I consulted and advisor.
15. My advisor was helpful.
16. The Department course schedule accommodated my own scheduling needs.

## **PART II**

### **Please respond to the following 8 questions**

- A. Why did you choose to major in economics?
- B. Are there aspects of the major program that you believe are particularly strong? Explain.
- C. Are there aspects of the major program that you believe are particularly weak? Explain.
- D. Which courses in math, statistics, and computer science required or allowed in the major were the most helpful and which the least helpful? Why?
- E. What, if any, math statistics, or computer courses do you believe should be added to or deleted from the major? Why?
- F. What suggestions do you have for improving the economics major program?
- G. In what ways could the department have better helped you while you were pursuing your degree?
- H. Please make any other comments you wish.

**ASSESSMENT**

PF 102

**General Education Assessment Plans**

ECON 1A: Intro to Macroeconomic Analysis

ECON 1B: Intro to Microeconomic Analysis

**General Course Information**

Course Names and Numbers:	ECON 1A. Intro to Macroeconomic Analysis ECON 1B: Intro to Microeconomic Analysis
General Education Area:	D1A - Foundations in Social and Behavioral Sciences
Name of Coordinator for Course:	Kristin Van Gaasbeck (Assessment Committee Chair)
Department Oversight Committee:	Coordinator & Dept. Assessment Committee Members: Kristin Van Gaasbeck (Assessment Committee Chair), Terri Sexton, Mark Siegler, Smile Dube, and Sean Corcoran

Description of steps taken each semester to ensure compliance with the Category Criteria:

Course syllabi will be reviewed by the course coordinator and Economics department assessment committee for clarity and consistency. Representative samples of student-generated writing from each course section will be reviewed by the coordinator and curriculum committee for general compliance with criteria.

**Specific course learning outcomes common to all sections of the course**

ECON 1A: Intro to Macroeconomic Analysis

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the assumptions and theories that have been used to analyze and explain the performance of national economies, with particular emphasis on unemployment, inflation, and economic growth and the policies that governments use to try to improve that performance.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to use correctly the vocabulary of economics to analyze and synthesize data, draw conclusions, and use models to discuss potential causes of central macroeconomic questions such as the potential causes of economic fluctuations and economic growth, how government, monetary and fiscal policy, and banking affect the macroeconomy, and the U.S. economy in a global context.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how such macroeconomic issues as unemployment, inflation, economic growth, and national policies differentially impact social groups which differ in age, education, race and ethnicity, and gender
4. Demonstrate an understanding of individual and or collective contributions of one or more of the following groups—women and women’s groups,

African Americans, Mexican Americans, other ethnic or religious groups, or persons with disabilities—to the development and refinement of macroeconomic concepts, theories, and analysis, and thus, to human society.

#### ECON 1B: Intro to Microeconomic Analysis

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the assumptions and theories that have been used to analyze and explain how business firms, individuals, government, and government agencies interact in a global economy.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to use correctly the vocabulary of economics to analyze and synthesize data, draw conclusions, and use models to discuss potential causes of market distortions, inefficiency and income distribution in the U.S.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how microeconomic issues such as market structures and government policies impact different social groups. These groups tend to differ in age, education, race and ethnicity, and gender
4. Demonstrate an understanding of individual and or collective contributions of one or more of the following groups—women and women's groups, African Americans, Mexican Americans, other ethnic or religious groups, or persons with disabilities—to the development and refinement of microeconomic concepts, theories, and analysis, and thus, to human society.

#### ***Common course assignments or activities designed to facilitate student achievement of these learning objectives.***

While instructors have great flexibility in the course assignments they use to help the students achieve the course-specific learning outcomes for ECON 1A and ECON 1B, both the assigned activities and the tools used to assess students' achievement of these learning outcomes (i.e., examination questions) are comparable. Classes typically entail 3-4 exams and 1-3 short papers or reports on such topics as unemployment, public debt, economic resources, scarcity and opportunity costs, markets in a global economy, etc.

#### ***Common course strategies that will be used to assess student achievement of learning objectives.***

Procedurally, the department assessment process works as follows: Each instructor selects four questions (one for each outcome) to assess course-specific versions of the GE Learning Outcomes, based on testable economic concepts and multiple choice questions provided by the department's assessment committee for each learning outcome. At the end of each semester, each instructor will submit the questions used along with the outcomes to the assessment committee. The assessment committee then carefully evaluates these questions and places some in a "test bank" of assessment questions for future use (see rubric below).

<b>GE Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Course-Specific Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Example Assessment Tool(s)</b>
1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the unique perspective taken by at least one social or behavioral science in its study of human society and human behavior	1. Demonstrate an understanding of the assumptions and theories that have been used to analyze and explain the performance of national economies, with particular emphasis on unemployment, inflation, and economic growth and the policies that governments use to try to improve that performance.	<i>The principle that the cost of something is equal to what is sacrificed to get it, is known as the:</i> a. marginal principle b. principle of opportunity cost c. principle of diminishing returns d. reality principle
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the inquiry methods used by at least one of the social or behavioral science disciplines.	2. Demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to use correctly the vocabulary of economics and economic models to analyze and synthesize data, draw conclusions, and discuss potential causes of central macroeconomic questions such as the potential causes of economic fluctuations and economic growth, how government, monetary and fiscal policy, and banking affect the macroeconomy, and the U.S. economy in a global context.	<i>The extra benefit resulting from a small increase in an activity is called the:</i> a. opportunity cost b. marginal benefit c. marginal cost d. diminishing returns of the activity

<p>3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the diversity that exists in human societies.</p>	<p>3. Demonstrate an understanding of how such macroeconomic issues as unemployment, inflation, &amp; national policies differentially impact social groups which differ in ages, educational levels, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender.</p>	<p><i>on criticism of government programs which are designed to assist the poor is that</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>they create incentives for people to become dependent on these programs.</li> <li>they typically account for a majority of annual government expenditures.</li> <li>those who receive assistance rarely meet the criterion for eligibility.</li> <li>the majority of those below the poverty line (an absolute level of income set by the federal government for each family size below which a family is deemed to be in poverty) refuse to accept government assistance.</li> </ol>
<p>4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the contributions to human society of at least two of the following groups: women, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, gays &amp; lesbians, and persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Demonstrate an understanding of individual and or collective contributions of one or more of the following- groups--women and women's groups, and African American, Mexican American, other ethnic, religious, persons with disabilities--social groups to the development and refinement of macroeconomic concepts, theories, and analysis, and thus, to human society.</p>	<p><i>Ending discrimination against minority groups in the educational process and in employment situations would cause total domestic output to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fall, because of the increased costs of training and living.</li> <li>rise, because spending on consumer goods and services would decrease.</li> <li>rise, because of an increase in the productivity of the labor force.</li> <li>fall, since trained minority workers would force some present workers out of their jobs.</li> </ol>

## ***Description of the Performance Criteria Used to Evaluate Reports and Papers***

While this is a lower division general education course, students are still expected to do some writing in the class. Student papers and reports are typed, free of grammatical, spelling, and usage errors, and evaluated based on the following type of criteria.

Examples of short paper titles:

1. Use the supply and demand model to explain why it is difficult to find on-campus parking space during peak mid-day times, while it is easier to find a parking space during less popular evening hours.
2. Why do our political leaders favor exports of U.S. goods and “buy American” policies?
3. What is the opportunity cost of your college degree?

Example: Grading Rubric for a short Report/Paper

The A Report/Paper: (a) addresses the main thesis and relevant economic concepts; (b) demonstrates the significance of the concept(s) in the context of the general argument developed in the main text and lectures; (c) demonstrates some analytical grasp of the argument; (d) is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

The B Report/Paper: Satisfies points (a)-(d) above, but is written at a lower level of analysis, and is less clear in demonstrating the significance of the main thesis and relevant economic concepts.

The C Report/Paper: Satisfies a, b, and d (as in the A Paper above), but displays a weak analytical grasp, is written at a lower analytical level, and does not clearly demonstrate the significance of the main thesis and relevant economic concepts.

The D Report/Paper: Provides a weak description of the main thesis and other relevant economic concepts, provides a weak demonstration of the link to the general argument provided by the main text of the courses and the class lectures, demonstrates a limited analytical grasp of the argument, but is largely free of spelling, grammar, and usage errors.

The Failing Report/Paper: Satisfies none of the above conditions

Each Report/Paper must first specify the main thesis and economic concepts in a succinct paragraph or two. This point must then be compared/contrasted to the argument found in the main course text in order to address the questions: Does the main thesis contradict, complement, or supplement the argument made in your text? How So? Students are expected to evaluate their thesis or arguments in the report, using the theory and other concepts developed and discussed in the class.

## ***Feedback Mechanisms***

Feedback to faculty members teaching this course will come from the assessment committee which prepares a report on scores based on results submitted to the coordinator at the end of each semester. The report is discussed at a department-wide meeting before the beginning of each semester. Faculty will be able to share strategies deemed effective. Feedback to and from the GE assessment committee will be via the General Education Outcome Assessment Summary Reporting Form provided below.

Each semester, a random sample of faculty teaching ECON 1A and ECON 1B are required to complete this form and submit it to the Chair of the assessment committee. In anticipation of the Department's self study and as part of the GE Area D review, the assessment committee requested that all faculty teaching ECON 1A and ECON 1B complete this form. The results are discussed below.

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course: \_\_\_\_\_ CRN: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part I** - Please enter the information below

	Outcome #1	Outcome #2	Outcome #3	Outcome #4
Number of <u>Correct</u> Responses				
Number of <u>Total</u> Responses				
Exam (midterm or final)				

Part II – Please write the question asked to address each of the following outcomes.

**OUTCOME #1:** Demonstrate an understanding of the unique perspective taken by at least one social or behavioral science discipline in its study of society and human behavior.

**OUTCOME #2:** Demonstrate an understanding of the inquiry methods used by at least one of the social or behavioral sciences.

**OUTCOME #3:** Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity that exists in human societies.

**OUTCOME #4:** Demonstrate an understanding of the contributions to human society of at least two of the following groups: women, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, gays and lesbians and persons with disabilities.

**Writing**

These are not upper division courses, and thus, include some graded student writing assignments, but not necessarily the 1500 words of graded writing expected of upper division courses. In cases where writing is undertaken, the grading of papers and reports will use the rubric developed for this purpose as described above.

ECON 112: European Economic History

**General Course Information**

Course Name and Number:	ECON 112: European Economic History
General Education Areas:	C1 – World Civilizations
Name of Coordinator for Course:	Course Instructor (John Henry)
Department Oversight Committee:	Course Coordinator & Dept. Assessment Committee <u>Members:</u> Kristin Van Gaasbeck (Assessment Committee Chair), Terri Sexton, Mark Siegler, Smile Dube, and Sean Corcoran

Description of steps taken each semester to ensure compliance with the Category Criteria:

Syllabus will be reviewed by the department coordinator, the department assessment committee, and the instructor of record. Representative student essays will be reviewed for compliance with criteria.

**Specific course learning outcomes**

Students will be able to:

1. gain appreciation for the role of the economy in explaining change and various developments in larger society, including science and technology.

2. come to a respectable level of understanding of the distinctions among tribal, feudal, slave, capitalist, and socialist economic organization.
3. develop an understanding of and appreciation for the “embedded” nature of the economy and the debates surrounding this issue.
4. develop an understanding of the role of the economy in development, perpetuation, or amelioration of various inequalities
5. develop an appreciation for the theories which have shaped our thinking on the matters above.

***Description of some course assignments and activities designed to facilitate student achievement of learning objectives***

1. Reading assignments specific to above objectives.
2. Essay examinations specifically testing objectives.
3. Formation of study groups to address list of questions from which examinations are drawn.

***Description of course strategies that will be used to assess student achievement of these learning objectives***

The essay questions are designed to address each of the above objectives, some of which are addressed in each examination. All essays are returned with copious criticism and comments, and students are allowed to rewrite specific responses in order to better prepare themselves for the next examination. (Grades are not changed as a consequence of this exercise.)

***Performance criteria used to evaluate student achievement of these learning objectives***

The portion(s) of each question(s) designed to test student understanding of the objective(s) are evaluated separately through a simple check system with 3 levels evaluating responses: less than satisfactory, satisfactory, more than satisfactory. A 70% success rate (satisfactory or more than satisfactory) indicates that the learning objective standard has been satisfied.

***Feedback Mechanism***

At the conclusion of the course, the instructor of record will communicate the questions used to assess the objectives and the student responses (on the above scale) to the department assessment coordinator. A meeting will be held in which strategies and tactics will be discussed to improve the course in this respect.

Any modifications agreed on will be implemented the following semester in which the course is to be taught.

### ***Writing Requirement***

The grading of student work includes comments on writing skills, corrections of errors of grammar, spelling, syntax, and the invitation to rewrite portions of the examinations. It is estimated that the examinations require approximately 2500 words over the course of the semester. A grading rubric for essays follows:

The A essay: (a) specifies the main point(s) of the argument clearly; (b) demonstrates the significance of the main point(s) in the context of the general argument developed in the main text and lectures; (c) demonstrates some analytical grasp of the argument; (d) is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

The B essay: Satisfies points a-d above, but is written at a lower level of analysis, and is less clear in demonstrating the significance of the main points

The C essay: Satisfies a, b, and d (as in the A essay above), but displays a weak analytical grasp, is written at a lower analytical level, and does not clearly demonstrate the significance of the main points.

The D essay: Provides a weak description of the main points of the argument and the significance of the main points, provides a weak demonstration of the link to the general argument provided by the main texts of the courses and the class lectures, demonstrates a limited analytical grasp of the argument, but is largely free of spelling, grammar, and usage errors.

The Failing Report/Paper: Satisfies none of the above conditions

## ECON 181: Economics of Racism

### General Course Information

Course Name and Number:	ECON 181: Economics of Racism
General Education Areas:	D2 - Major Social Issues of the Contemporary Era
Name of Coordinator for Course:	Course Instructor (John Henry)
Department Oversight Committee:	Course Coordinator & Dept. Assessment Committee <u>Members:</u> Kristin Van Gaasbeck (Assessment Committee Chair), Terri Sexton, Mark Siegler, Smile Dube, and Sean Corcoran

Description of steps taken each semester to ensure compliance with the Category Criteria: Syllabus will be reviewed by the department coordinator, the department assessment committee, and the instructor of record. Representative student essays will be reviewed for compliance with criteria.

### ***Specific course learning outcomes***

Students will be able to:

1. gain an appreciation for the role of economic forces and factors in explaining the development and institutionalization of racism.
2. evaluate evidence in social theory.
3. develop an appreciation for the misuse of statistical procedures.
4. better understand the nature of social processes in general.
5. better understand the relation between the examination of racism and the examination of social injustice in general.

### ***Description of some course assignments and activities designed to facilitate student achievement of learning objectives***

1. Reading assignments specific to above objectives.
2. Essay examinations specifically testing objectives.
3. Formation of study groups to address list of questions from which examinations are drawn.

### ***Description of course strategies that will be used to assess student achievement of these learning objectives***

The essay questions are designed to address each of the above objectives, some of which are addressed in each examination.

Specifically, to address objective #1, for instance, students are asked to explain the origins of racism in the Spanish conquest of the Americas (exam #1), the development of the bipartite race relationship in the southern U.S. following the Civil War (exam #2), and to address the questions, "Racism is an economic question. Discuss and evaluate" on the final examination. Objectives #2 and 3 are dealt with in questions dealing with the economics of affirmative action (final exam), and questions dealing with Spanish colonization (exam #1) where they are asked to evaluate evidence brought forward from different perspectives and to deal with some low-level statistical inference.

All essays are returned with copious criticism and comments, and students are allowed to rewrite specific responses in order to better prepare themselves for the next examination. (Grades are not changed as a consequence of this exercise.)

### ***Performance criteria used to evaluate student achievement of these learning objectives***

The portion(s) of each question(s) designed to test student understanding of the objective(s) are evaluated separately through a simple check system with 3 levels evaluating responses: less than satisfactory, satisfactory, more than satisfactory. A 70% success rate (satisfactory or more than satisfactory) indicates that the learning objective standard has been satisfied.

### ***Feedback Mechanism***

At the conclusion of the course, the instructor of record will communicate the questions used to assess the objectives and the student responses (on the above scale) to the department assessment coordinator. A meeting will be held in which strategies and tactics will be discussed to improve the course in this respect. Any modifications agreed on will be implemented the following semester in which the course is to be taught.

### ***Writing Requirement***

The grading of student work includes comments on writing skills, corrections of errors of grammar, spelling, syntax, and the invitation to rewrite portions of the examinations. It is estimated that the examinations require approximately 2500 words over the course of the semester. A grading rubric for essays follows:

The A essay: (a) specifies the main point(s) of the argument clearly; (b) demonstrates the significance of the main point(s) in the context of the general argument developed in the main text and lectures; (c) demonstrates some analytical grasp of the argument; (d) is well written and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

The B essay: Satisfies points a-d above, but is written at a lower level of analysis, and is less clear in demonstrating the significance of the main points

The C essay: Satisfies a, b, and d (as in the A essay above), but displays a weak analytical grasp, is written at a lower analytical level, and does not clearly demonstrate the significance of the main points.

The D essay: Provides a weak description of the main points of the argument and the significance of the main points, provides a weak demonstration of the link to the general argument provided by the main texts of the courses and the class lectures, demonstrates a limited analytical grasp of the argument, but is largely free of spelling, grammar, and usage errors.

The Failing Report/Paper: Satisfies none of the above conditions