

Economics of Sex, Drugs, and Crime

ECON 3960-001

Spring 2012

<p>Mike Martineau Office: Park Building 110b Mike.Martineau@Utah.edu</p>	<p>Classroom: LNCO 1100 Thursday 6:00 – 9:00pm</p>	<p>Office Hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Wed 1:00-2:00</i>• <i>By appointment – email me</i>
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The Course:

As the title suggests, this is not a typical course in Economics. The economic discipline is more than a trivial collection of supply and demand charts, but rather encompasses the very behavior of individuals. It is argued that economic theories can be utilized in nearly all aspects of society, and this course will prove this argument by applying the theories to the some of the most fascinating and illicit corners of society.

This course will cover some basic economic concepts, frameworks, and theories that will be used to explore the fascinating issues of sex, drugs, and crime. We will pursue interesting questions from the basic motivations of crime, to the effects that macroeconomic conditions have on alcohol consumption, to the optimal resource allocation used to enforce the law, and various aspects in between. Concepts such as (but not limited to) utility, rational behavior, resource allocation, and price elasticity will all be applied to various types of crimes. Although not formally required, a good understanding of basic economic principles is highly recommended.

While these course aspects will inevitably lead to various policy prescriptions, it must be made clear that this is an Economics course and not a political one. As such, there will be very little deviation from the discipline of Economics. All manner of discourse and opinions will be done with the utmost level of respect.

Seeing that there are various theoretical perspectives regarding these issues, participation and involvement is therefore essential in this course. While there is no formal textbook used, there will be a considerable amount of reading required, drawn mostly from peer-reviewed academic journals. Investing quality time exploring this literature will not only yield excellent class discussion, but will also prove to be worthwhile for your long-run pursuits.

Course Components:

Readings / Quizzes (Weekly)

The amount of reading for this course will be considerable, but worthwhile. 2 to 3 articles will be assigned each week, mostly drawing from peer-reviewed academic journals, but will also feature shorter ones from various publications (*The Economist*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, Etc). These readings are to be read before class and will prepare you for discussion and the occasional short quiz. The purpose of these articles is to familiarize yourself with the various economic principles within fascinating issues. Moreover, it allows students to digest and analyze the material rather than solely relying on the instructor's lectures. A key objective of this course is to learn how to view various issues through different economic frameworks, and reading many articles is the most efficient and worthwhile way of accomplishing this.

Mid-Term Exam (3/1/12)

A short mid-term exam will be given on which students will respond to a few short essay questions.

Research Paper (Due 4/26/12) and Optional Presentation

After becoming familiar with the general issues studied in the course, students will choose a topic on which to write a research paper. This should be a topic of interest to the student that will be grounds for considerable research. Students will become well acquainted with important aspects of their research topic, including background, history, economic effects, differing proposed policies, and overall economic/societal outcomes. The purpose of the paper will be to explore the issue in question from an economic framework and analyze the effects of the aspects involved.

The Paper:

The paper will contain the following 3 components:

1. A brief introduction and history of the issue.
2. A review of any existing literature on the topic.
3. An incorporation of economic principles and methodology that can aid in analyzing the issue. (Existing literature will provide numerous).

The paper should be 12-14 pages in length (double-spaced). To ensure that the paper is done in a timely manner, 2 important dates should be noted:

1. Paper Proposal (Due 2/23/12)

- An informal single-page proposal describing the topic of interest and potential associated economic principles. This proposal serves the purpose of getting students started early, as well as making sure the topic is a worthwhile and appropriate one for the course.

2. Paper Outline (Due 3/22/12)

- A more thorough outline of what your paper will entail, including economic areas of interest and specific data sources. About 2 pages in length.

Optional Presentation:

To incentivize greater participation, students have the option of presenting their research in class for extra points (10% of grade) and shorter required paper (10 page minimum in place of 12). Presentations should achieve the following:

- Present the background and history of the issue
- Explain the economic effects associated with the issue
- Present the proposed policies from different sides of the issue, including which arguments are most persuasive (in your opinion)
- Open up the topic for questions and facilitate ensuing discussion

Depending on the number of students interested, group presentations may be warranted, but will be left to the instructor's discretion. Class presentations should be about 15 to 20 minutes in duration and will be scheduled for the last 3 weeks of class.

Final Essay (Due 5/3)

A short final essay will be issued (likely a take-home) on which students will present their compiled knowledge of the economic issues during the semester.

Course Schedule:

- *Pre-determined schedules always change depending upon students' interests and timing, therefore, only a few set dates are presented here. The instructor reserves the right to make any changes, please check WebCT for any updates.*

Readings/Quizzes	• <i>Weekly</i>
Research Paper Proposal	• <i>Due February 23, 2012</i>
Mid-Term Exam	• <i>March 1, 2012</i>
Research Paper Outline	• <i>Due March 22, 2012</i>
Research Paper	• <i>Due April 26, 2012</i>
Final Exam	• <i>Due May 3, 2012</i>

Grading:

Components as a percentage of final grade:

- Readings / Quizzes - 20%
- Mid-Term Exam – 20%
- Research Paper – 35%
 - Proposal 5 pts
 - Outline 10 pts
- Final Exam – 25%
- *Optional Presentation – 10% extra*

Grade Scale:

A	93% and above
A-	90% to 92%
B+	87% to 89%
B	83% to 86%
B-	80% to 82%
C+	77% to 79%
C	73% to 76%
C-	70% to 72%
D+	65% to 69%
D	60% to 64%
D-	55% to 59%

Important dates and notes:

- Last day to drop: 1/18/12
- Last day to withdraw: 1/23/12
- Classes end: 4/25/12

Disability Policy:

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.