School of Economics Senior Seminar (ECO 489)

**Day and Time:** Wednesday 12:00-2:00 PM

**Location:** 201 Winslow Hall

**Instructors:**

Dr. Kathleen P. Bell  Dr. Mario Teisl  
Associate Professor  Chair and Professor  
School of Economics  School of Economics  
200 Winslow Hall  207 Winslow Hall  
(207) 581-3156  (207) 581-3162  
kpbell@maine.edu  teisl@maine.edu

**Office Hours:** Our normal office hours are respectively from 2:00-3:00 on Wednesdays. We will be happy to meet with students at other times by appointment. E-mail is the usually the best way to arrange such meetings.

**Prerequisites:** Major in Economics (BA or BS), or Financial Economics; Senior Standing; and a grade of C- or better in ECO 321 and ECO 350 (or ECO 420), or permission of the instructor.

**Course Description:** The School of Economics Senior Seminar (ECO 489) is a writing-intensive capstone course for economics majors. ECO 489 satisfies the University of Maine’s General Education Writing Intensive and Capstone Experience requirements.

**Course Objectives:** The goals of the course include: (1) providing students with an experience that typifies the work of professionals within the discipline of economics; (2) improving students’ ability to communicate their economics knowledge effectively; and (3) enhancing students’ analytical, communication, leadership, and professional skills.

**Course Website:** We will use the ECO 489 BlackBoard Website for course announcements, distribution of readings, and course assignments. The site allows for students to track required class preparation, includes a course calendar with due dates, and has an on-line grade book that permits students to view their grades throughout the course of the semester.

Your default Blackboard email address is your UMaine gmail address (e.g., XXX@maine.edu); please make sure that you check this email address daily during the semester. Additional resources for students about BlackBoard can be found at UMaine's Information Technologies web page (http://www.umaine.edu/it/). If you run into problems with Blackboard, reach out to informational technology staff (http://umaine.edu/it/helpcenter). You can contact them by phone (207.581.2506), email (ithelp@umit.maine.edu), or visit them in person at 17 Shibles Hall.
Course Ethic: Analytical, communication, and leadership skills are very important skills expected of college graduates. Many students do not have sufficient opportunity to cultivate these skills. Like just about every other skill, becoming proficient in these usually takes practice. Thus, ECO 489 is primarily about students practicing applying their knowledge of economics, gaining experience writing and speaking like economists, and increasing their development as professionals. To get the most out of ECO 489, we expect students to reflect on the field of economics, expand their economics skill-set through practice, and network with peers in and visitors to the course. Accordingly, success in ECO 489 will require students to invest time in the course activities.

We expect students to attend class, frequently visit the course Blackboard site, complete the assigned preparation for class, and participate in class activities. Absences will be excused for documented illness (i.e., written verification required) and university-sponsored activities (with prior permission). Some events for this course will occur outside the normal class meeting time. Obviously, allowances will be made in these instances to accommodate students’ schedules.

Homework/In-Class Assignments: We will ask students to complete various homework and in-class assignments. These assignments will vary in nature and are designed to help you achieve the course learning outcomes. We expect students to attend all class sessions; in-class assignments will not necessarily be announced in advance. We will often use the course Blackboard site to both announce and collect homework assignments.

Writing/Oral Assignments: We will ask students to complete written and oral assignments. Students will prepare two short essays and three short papers and will give several oral presentations. By receiving detailed feedback on these assignments, students will advance their writing, critical thinking, and communication skills. Unless otherwise noted, we expect you to work on these assignments as individuals, not as a class; however, we do encourage you to provide feedback on each other’s essays, papers, and presentations.

Students will prepare two short essays. These assignments will range in length from 250 to 500 words. These initial writing assignments will give students an opportunity to practice applying their writing and skills and gain experience receiving feedback on their writing.

Students will also complete three short papers. The short-paper assignments are as follows: Paper 1 (Analytical/Technical Brief for a Peer Audience of Economists); Paper 2 (Analytical/Technical Brief for a Public Audience); and Paper 3 (Press Release of Economics Research). Short papers 1 and 2 will be between 600 and 1200 words, and Short Paper 3 will be between 250 and 500 words.

Students will be asked to make several oral presentations in class. We will work with students on the development of oral communication skills. All students will present their second paper (Paper 2) to the class using a "lightning format," where each presentation is 5 minutes in length.

Although all of the writing assignments are short, they are expected to be substantial and well-written. That is, the short length should be because the writing is concise and well-crafted, not because there is little content. Students are strongly encouraged to seek advice from the instructors on these writing assignments.
All writing assignments must be submitted by Noon (class time) on the due dates. Students should submit electronic copies of assignments to the ECO489 Blackboard Site. Assignments not handed in by the due date (and receipt at 12:01 on the due date is considered late) will receive a grade of 0 unless you have made prior arrangements with us. Illness or family emergencies are usually the only acceptable reasons for missing an assignment deadline. If such a problem arises, you need to call or e-mail one of us before the deadline and provide a written justification (e.g., medical note) ASAP. Then, we can discuss alternatives. If you call and we are not in, leave a message with a phone number where we can reach you. Please be aware that, in our experience, writing always takes at least three times as long as one thinks that it should take.

**Grading and Deadlines:** Grades in this course will be the weighted average of multiple scores. Scores are based on the following weights:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of grade</th>
<th>When due/occurring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework/In-class Assignments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short essay 1</td>
<td>4 1/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short essay 2</td>
<td>4 2/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 1 – 1st Draft</td>
<td>4 2/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 1 – Final draft</td>
<td>20 2/26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 2 – 1st Draft</td>
<td>4 3/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 2 – Final draft</td>
<td>20 4/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 3 – 1st Draft</td>
<td>4 4/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 3 – Final draft</td>
<td>10 4/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Short Paper 2</td>
<td>10 Finals Week</td>
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**Disability Policy:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact Disability Support Services (East Annex, 581-2319).

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism and all forms of misrepresentation in academic work, and is unacceptable at The University of Maine. As stated in the University of Maine’s online undergraduate Student Handbook, plagiarism (the submission of another’s work without appropriate attribution) and cheating are violations of The University of Maine Student Conduct Code. An instructor who has probable cause or reason to believe a student has cheated may act upon such evidence and should report the case to the supervising faculty member or the Department Chair for appropriate action.

**Flu Contingency Plan:** In the event of disruption of normal classroom activities due to a flu outbreak, the format for this course may be modified to enable completion of the course. In that event, you will be provided with a revised syllabus that will supersede this version.