

ECO 489 Economics Senior Capstone Fall 2018

Course overview

The economics senior capstone course encourages students to bring together the various threads of their undergraduate academic programs in an experience that typifies the diverse professional work of economists. Using current economic and workforce issues to set the context for the course, students will integrate and further develop the knowledge and skills they have acquired as part of their economics major. Consistent with the writing-intensive nature of the course, students gain valuable communication skills by preparing writing assignments and presentations in conjunction with instructors.



Credits: 3

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

General Education Requirements Satisfied: Writing Intensive and Capstone

Course Delivery Method: Online, Blackboard Learning Management System

Instructors

Professor Kathleen P. Bell
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Teaching Assistant Mariya Pominova
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Student Hours

Teaching Assistant Mariya Pominova. Monday (11:00 AM-12:00 PM), Thursday (10:00 AM-12:00 PM), and by appointment.

Professor Kathleen P. Bell. Monday (3:00-4:30 PM), Wednesday (3:30-5:00 PM), and by appointment.

We both welcome you to contact us by email outside of class and student hours to arrange an appointment. We will respond to student e-mails during standard work hours, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Instructional Materials and Methods: Students will complete reading and video assignments made available on the course Blackboard site. No textbook is required.

Course Goals

- (1) Provide students with a culminating, integrative academic experience that typifies the work and research of professionals within the discipline of economics;
- (2) Improve students' ability to communicate and apply their economics knowledge effectively; &
- (3) Enhance students' analytical and professional skills.

Instructional Objectives

- (1) Students successfully complete diverse course assignments;
- (2) Students successfully navigate and contribute to the online learning environment;
- (3) Students effectively bring together their analytical and communication skills to make economics-based arguments as a result of course content and assignments; &
- (4) Students acquire professional skills by engaging with instructional technologies and completing assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students successfully completing the course will:

- (1) be proficient at applying their knowledge of economics to make arguments and convey ideas;
- (2) gain familiarity with the diverse work and research of professionals applying economics thinking and conducting economics research;
- (3) improve their written and oral communication skills (critique and revise their own writings, presentations, and oral communications; tailor communications to distinct audiences; organize ideas effectively; adhere to proper mechanics and style; and achieve clarity of expression in language, argument, and idea); &
- (4) improve analytical and professional skills.

Course Ethic

Analytical, communication, and professional 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 the course. Accordingly, success in ECO 489 requires you to invest time in the course activities.

Course Website

We will use the course website (ECO 489 Blackboard) to share key resources, communicate course announcements, post and submit assignments, and engage in discussions. The site allows for students to track required tasks, allows for electronic submission of assignments, and has an on-line grade book that permits students to view their grades throughout the course of the semester. You can access BlackBoard multiple ways, including through your mycampus portal (mycampus.maine.edu). Additional resources for students about BlackBoard can be found at UMaine's Information Technologies web page (www.umaine.edu/it/). If you run into problems with Blackboard, reach out to informational technology staff by phone (207.581.2506) or visit them in person at 17 Shibles Hall.

We expect you to visit the course Blackboard site frequently. Your default BlackBoard email address is your UMaine (e.g., XXX@maine.edu). To avoid missing course announcements, please make sure that you check this email address daily during the semester.

Assignments

We designed the course materials and assignments to engage students to participate actively in the course, learn the material, and bolster their knowledge and skills. By completing readings, watching content videos, completing assignments, and participating actively in class discussions, you will achieve the course learning outcomes.

Reading & Video Assignments. We expect you to complete the weekly content assignments prior to completing the homework assignments. We have found that doing readings and watching videos before homework assignments improves the way students engage with course material and enhances student performance on assignments. These content assignments are made available at the course BlackBoard site. We organized class content by week on the course website, and these preparatory assignments appear by week.

Homework Assignments. We will ask students to complete various homework assignments. These assignments will vary in nature and are designed to help you achieve the course learning outcomes. We will post assignments at the course BlackBoard site, and you will submit these assignments via that site. Assignments will typically be due on Friday by 5PM. The course outline and grading section of this syllabus provide an overview of the initial tentative timing of these key assignments. Please check the course BlackBoard site for the final details of all assignments.

We will ask students to complete several written and oral communication assignments. Students will prepare one short essay, two short papers, one research presentation, and one short oral presentation.

Initial short-essay assignment. Students practice applying their writing skills and gain experience receiving feedback on their writing (250-500 words).

Article for Public Audiences. Students employ their economics intuition and knowledge to advance an argument about a topical subject (500-800 words).

Technical report for a Peer Professional Audience. Students pose a research question and use data and economic methods to answer that question (800-1200 words).

Research presentation for a Peer Professional Audience. Students prepare a research-style presentation (slides or poster) summarizing their technical report.

Oral presentation for Public Audiences. Students prepare a short oral presentation of their technical report and practice their professional “elevator pitch” summarizing the knowledge and skills they have developed as an economics major.

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.

Grading and Deadlines: Your final letter grade in this course will be the weighted average of multiple assignment grades. Listed below are the weights (percent of grade) and tentative due dates of these assignments.

	Percent of grade	Tentative due date
Short essay	5	07 Sept
Article – Draft	5	21 Sept
Article – Final	25	03 Oct
Technical Report – Draft	5	19 Oct
Technical Report – Final	25	09 Nov
Research Presentation – Draft	5	16 Nov
Research Presentation – Final	20	30 Nov
Oral Presentation – Draft	5	07 Dec
Oral Presentation – Final	5	14 Dec

Course Policies

Missed/Tardy Assignments Grading Policy: If students need to reschedule the submission of their assignments, they must have an authorized excuse. We understand that extenuating circumstances arise that can make meeting course requirements difficult. Unfortunately, illnesses, death in the family or other difficult events are part of life. Such events are unwelcomed and because we understand how difficult these times are, if you contact Professor Bell within 24 hours of the event and provide documentation, she will work with you to reschedule an assignment due date. Students will receive a grade of 0 for missed assignments.

Campus Policies

Academic Honesty Statement: Academic honesty is very important. It is dishonest to cheat on exams, to copy term papers, to submit papers written by another person, to fake experimental results, or to copy or reword parts of books or articles into your own papers without appropriately citing the source. Students committing or aiding in any of these violations may be given failing grades for an assignment or for an entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. In addition to any academic action taken by an instructor, these violations are also subject to action under the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. The maximum possible sanction under the student conduct code is dismissal from the University.

Students with disabilities statement: If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Student Accessibility Services, 121 East Annex, 581.2319, as early as possible in the term. Students who have already been approved for accommodations by SAS and have a current accommodation letter should meet with me (Professor Kathleen P. Bell) privately as soon as possible.

Course Schedule Disclaimer (Disruption Clause): In the event of an extended disruption of normal classroom activities, the format for this course may be modified to enable its completion within its programmed time frame. In that event, you will be provided an addendum to the syllabus that will supersede this version.

Observance of Religious Holidays/Events: The University of Maine recognizes that when students are observing significant religious holidays, some may be unable to attend classes or labs, study, take tests, or work on other assignments. If they provide adequate notice (at least one week and longer if at all possible), these students are allowed to make up course requirements as long as this effort does not create an unreasonable burden upon the instructor, department or University. At the discretion of the instructor, such coursework could be due before or after the examination or assignment. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to a student's grade for the examination, study, or course requirement on the day of religious observance. The student shall not be marked absent from the class due to observing a significant religious holiday. In the case of an internship or clinical, students should refer to the applicable policy in place by the employer or site.

Sexual Violence Policy

Sexual Discrimination Reporting. The University of Maine is committed to making campus a safe place for students. Because of this commitment, if you tell any of your teachers about sexual discrimination involving members of the campus, **your teacher is required to report** this information to the campus Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity. Behaviors that can be "sexual discrimination" include sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, relationship abuse (dating violence and domestic violence), sexual misconduct, and gender discrimination. Therefore, all of these behaviors must be reported.

Why do teachers have to report sexual discrimination?

The university can better support students in trouble if we know about what is happening. Reporting also helps us to identify patterns that might arise – for example, if more than one victim reports having been assaulted or harassed by the same individual.

What will happen to a student if a teacher reports?

An employee from the Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity will reach out to you and offer support, resources, and information. You will be invited to meet with the employee to discuss the situation and the various options available to you.

If you have requested confidentiality, the University will weigh your request that no action be taken against the institution's obligation to provide a safe, nondiscriminatory environment for all students. If the University determines that it can maintain confidentiality, you must understand that the institution's ability to meaningfully investigate the incident and pursue disciplinary action, if warranted, may be limited. There are times when the University may not be able to honor a request for confidentiality because doing so would pose a risk to its ability to provide a safe, nondiscriminatory environment for everyone. If the University determines that it cannot

maintain confidentiality, the University will advise you, prior to starting an investigation and, to the extent possible, will share information only with those responsible for handling the institution's response. The University is committed to the well-being of all students and will take steps to protect all involved from retaliation or harm.

If you want to talk in confidence to someone about an experience of sexual discrimination, please contact these resources:

For *confidential resources on campus*: **Counseling Center: 207-581-1392** or **Cutler Health Center: at 207-581-4000**. For *confidential resources off campus*: **Rape Response Services: 1-800-310-0000** or **Spruce Run: 1-800-863-9909**.

Other resources: The resources listed below can offer support but may have to report the incident to others who can help:

For *support services on campus*: **Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention: 207-581-1406**, **Office of Community Standards: 207-581-1409**, **University of Maine Police: 207-581-4040 or 911**. Or see the OSAVP website for a complete list of services at <http://www.umaine.edu/osavp/>

Course Outline*

Week	Dates	Content Themes	Homework Assignments (due date)
1	04 Sept – 09 Sept	Course introduction, economical writing	Short essay (07 Sept)
2	10 Sept – 16 Sept	Using writing to advance economic arguments	
3	17 Sept – 23 Sept	Using data to advance economic arguments	Article for public audiences, draft (21 Sept)
4	24 Sept – 30 Sept	Understanding the research process in economics	
5	01 Oct – 03 Oct	Finding and collecting economic data	Article for public audiences, Final (03 Oct)
6	10 Oct – 14 Oct	Making sense of published research	
7	15 Oct – 21 Oct	Importance of communication to professional careers in economics	Technical report for a peer professional, audience, draft (19 Oct)
8	22 Oct – 28 Oct	Presenting research to peer audiences	
9	29 Oct – 04 Nov	Preparing slide presentations	
10	05 Nov – 11 Nov	Preparing poster presentations	Technical report for a peer professional, audience, final (09 Nov)
11	13 Nov – 18 Nov	Giving and receiving professional feedback	Research presentation, draft (16 Nov)
12	19 Nov – 20 Nov	Presenting and engaging with public audiences	
13	26 Nov – 02 Dec	Exploring new ways of communicating economic arguments and ideas	Research presentation, Final (30 Nov)
14	03 Dec – 09 Dec	Communicating your skills and career aspirations	Short oral presentation, draft (07 Dec)
15	10 Dec – 14 Dec	Reflecting on your undergraduate academic experience	Short oral presentation, Final (14 Dec)

* This outline reflects our initial planning for the course. To support your success and the course goals, we may adjust dates and content. The course BlackBoard website will be updated to reflect such changes. *