

## ECONOMICS 227: INTERNATIONAL TRADE PODCAST ASSIGNMENT

### Introduction

Why a podcast? Using this different medium, as opposed to an assignment like writing a paper, you will have to reconsider who your audience is and how you can present the information to them in an effective, engaging manner, taking into account the constraints a podcast creates. The goal of this assignment is to research, write, produce, and disseminate a podcast analyzing a current trade policy controversy. You, along with your assigned group members (roughly 4 students per group), will research your topic and present in the format of a podcast. The material you present should cover the background of the controversy, varying perspectives on the controversy, the relationship to economic/international trade theory, and your own policy recommendation(s). The podcast should also justify the policy recommendation- why is it better than alternatives, for example. The way to synthesize and present all of this information will be up to each group- be creative!

### Equipment

Garageband software, available on Macs, make recording and producing a podcast relatively easy. All you need is a Mac and a microphone. The [Center for Creative Technology](#) has multimedia production labs, as well as an audio production studio (requires training) to facilitate your project. There are tons of tutorials on Garageband, so I recommend Googling to find one that makes the most sense to you. Garageband lets you record audio, play with settings, move sound bytes around, easily add music and adjust the volume quickly. I am not expecting your podcasts to be of professional quality; at the same time, there is a minimum quality, below which you may lose points (think: background noises, distracting fluctuating volume of vocals, etc). Garageband will help you export your podcast into MP3 format, which you will then upload into the appropriate Google Drive folder on Moodle.

### Requirements

Each podcast must follow certain parameters.

- Include a musical element (listen to a few podcasts and pay attention to how they integrate music)
- The length must be less than 25 minutes - I suggest aiming for 20 minutes
- Use a conversational style - the audience shouldn't be able to tell if you have a script you are following

- The intended audience is the general public. You should be able to play the podcast to a non-economist, and they should be able to follow it and be engaged with the material.
- Everyone in the group should have a roughly equal contribution in the entire production. Consider self-tracking or setting up a collaboration website that helps you keep track of progress throughout the semester and tasks everyone has completed (while there are set-up costs in terms of time, an app like Trello may be useful; this type of system is often used to manage collaborative projects in the private sector). At the end of the semester, I will ask you to evaluate your contribution relative to your group members.
- Introduce all of the “hosts” (all group members)
- Introduce the controversy
- Identify stakeholders and perspectives- who is affected, how do they feel about the policy/controversy?
- State your policy recommendation - what should be done about the controversy?
- Justify your policy recommendation - use economic theory and international trade concepts studied in the course to discuss the impacts of the controversy and why your proposed solution is the best option available.
- Each podcast should have an accompanying written bibliography citing sources in APA format (standard in economics)
- Each podcast should be accompanied by a detailed outline (no full sentences; includes topics discussed)
- The final podcast must be submitted in MP3 format

In addition to incorporating these elements, the podcast will be graded based on quality: quality of the presentation, quality of the arguments, and production quality (to an extent). There will also be a few intermittent deadlines, and your timeliness/adherence to the guidelines will also affect your grade.

## Important Dates

- **Preference Selection:** Submit your preferences through the survey link on Moodle homepage by **noon Thursday October 18**. I will assume you do not have any group or topic preferences if you do not submit by this time.
- **Introductory podcast** (one per group): This 5-10 minute introductory podcast will: (i) introduce all group members; (ii) introduce your topic; and (iii) test podcasting equipment/submission method. In addition to introductions, the podcast should as the foundation of your research, perhaps explaining the background, current trends,

current policies, etc. Introductory podcasts should also address some of the questions you hope to answer in the full podcast. Since this is also a test of the equipment, introductory podcasts should include a musical element. The introductory podcast will be due (uploaded to provided Google Drive folder) by the **end of the day Tuesday October 30**.

- **Annotated Bibliography (evaluative)** (one per group): A written assignment containing three sources (at a minimum) you are using in your project. The citations should be in APA format. An annotated bibliography entry can be thought of as a one-paragraph critical summary of the work. A paragraph should be roughly composed as follows: (i) 2-4 sentences summarizing the main ideas; (ii) 1-2 sentences evaluating the source- is it biased, how does it fit in with other literature, is it reliable and current; (iii) 1-2 sentences reflecting on the source- is it helpful, how does it contribute to your research, what context does it provide, what aspect of your argument does it speak to or against, what questions does it generate in your mind? Annotated bibliographies should examine a variety of sources, perhaps news articles, economic literature, legal text, or op-eds. Carefully curate the pieces you include in the annotated bibliography- they should not be the first three articles you happened to read. The annotated bibliography is due at the **start of class Thursday November 15**.
- **Final podcast** (one per group): The final podcast submission is due by the **end of the day Sunday December 16**, uploaded to the appropriate Google Drive folder on Moodle. In addition to the podcast, each group should upload an outline of the podcast and a bibliography in APA format (not annotated).
- **Review** (one per student): Podcasts are made to be listened to. Each student will be assigned a podcast to listen to and review. How was the quality of production? The quality of research? Did it feel conversational? Appropriate for the target audience? Was the analysis reasonable and reasonably accurate? Do you agree or disagree with the policy recommendation? Peer reviews will be 2 pages in length and due by **5pm Friday December 21**.
- **Reflection** (one per student): In addition to reviewing another group's final product, you will write a 1-2 page reflection on your own process of collaborating with a group to produce your project. How well did you work together? What strategies did you use to ensure everyone contributed equally? How did you feel about the whole process of researching a controversy, presenting it in a conversational manner, and knowing classmates can listen to it? What did you find particularly difficult? The reflection will also be due by **5pm Friday December 21**.

## Topics

These are my suggested topics; other topics are possible upon approval (with 8 groups, some topics will not be used). (Questions posed here are only intended to guide you as you start thinking about these topics; they should not limit your podcast discussion)

1. US-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement: recently renegotiated revision of NAFTA, pending legislative approval in all three countries.
2. US Section 301 tariffs on Chinese goods on \$250 billion of imports to force policy change in China
3. US Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum or automobiles for purposes of national security
4. Brexit and relationship with international trade. As Britain decides how to disentangle itself from the European Union's common market, it must confront how it should manage international agreements signed by the EU. Will it renegotiate these deals? Try to maintain them? How will the uncertainty affect local markets?
5. EU and Mercosur trade agreement: Currently under negotiation, this trade deal between the EU and a bloc of South American countries has hit a stumbling block when it comes to agriculture and automobiles. Can the parties overcome these obstacles? Should they overcome the obstacles?
6. Agricultural subsidies in developed countries impacting developing countries: Agricultural subsidies in developed countries are inefficient but deeply entrenched. Why do these policies harm developing countries? What are the negative effects? Is it likely that these policies will be removed?
7. Immigration policies: What are the effects of immigration? What immigration policies are countries implementing? What are the effects of these policies? Can efficiency be improved?
8. Openness of capital accounts and exposure to financial networks: Previously, groups like the IMF have sought greater openness of financial markets to ease the flow of capital across borders and promote development. How is this view evolving following the 2008 financial crisis?
9. China's Belt and Road Initiative: China is undertaking a massive, controversial infrastructure project across the Eastern Hemisphere. What are the costs and benefits of the policies?
10. The US' relationship with the WTO: Despite being a founding member of the GATT, the US is currently on rocky footing with the WTO, complaining that the WTO frequently rules against the US. What are the sources of the souring relationship? How are the WTO and its effectiveness affected?