ECB 109

Economics of Crime (FYS)

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Office Hours

M 11:00-11:45

T 2:30-3:15

W 11:00-11:45

TH 2:30-3:15

F 11:00-11:45

Class Hours

M 9:00-11:00; 1:15-2:30

T 9:00-11:00; 1:15-2:30

W 9:00-11:00; 1:15-2:30

TH 9:00-11:00; 1:15-2:30

F 9:00-11:00

It is not likely we will need to meet every afternoon implied by this schedule. However, we might benefit from some scheduling flexibility in the afternoon from time to time. So, keep 1:15-2:45 M-TH open for class meetings.

You are expected to attend every class scheduled meeting.

Dates and Times to Remember

You will be participating in two workshops related to the Student Success program this block. (See below for more details about this program.) The workshop schedule for this block is as follows:

Time Management for Academic Success workshop at **10:00 on Tuesday, September 4** in Hedges Lounge (Thomas Commons)

Well-being and Self-care workshop at **9:00 on Thursday, September 13** in College Hall 118 (classroom)

Course Description

At the heart of the field of microeconomics is the axiom that people are rational-that is, they always choose the best available option when making decisions and respond to economic incentives in predictable and systematic ways. So, are criminals rational? Do they behave in predictable and systematic ways when deciding to commit crimes? Do they respond in predictable and systematic ways to laws and public policies intended to reduce criminal activity? We will explore the economic causes and consequences of crime, with emphasis on crimes against property, crimes against persons, and victimless crimes. We will also examine, in some detail, the economics of the market for illegal drugs, beginning with the first link in the supply chain and ending with the final consumer. We will employ a variety to data sources to identify crime and punishment trends over time as well as race-based and gender-based differences in criminal behavior and punishment. Seminar activities will include class discussions of assigned readings and a series of data-driven projects and writing assignments culminating in class presentations. (First Year Seminar (FYS))

Educational Priorities and Outcomes

The seminar supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphasis on **inquiry** (apply theoretical models and statistical techniques to develop insights into the economics of crime), **reasoning** (employ graphical analysis and statistical techniques to facilitate economic analysis and support conclusions**)**, and **communication** (develop written and verbal communication skills through a multi-part data project).

Course Materials

Required Texts

Daryl Hellman and Neil Alper, *Economics of Crime* (2006)

Tom Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel* (2016)

Both texts are available at the Cornell bookstore.

Readings from these texts will be assigned in advance of the lectures/discussions of the material. You are expected to do the assigned readings before the corresponding lectures/discussions.

Additional Readings

Additional readings will be assigned from time to time. The additional readings are listed on the course outline. (See below for more details.)

Some of the additional readings are in PDF format (denoted by PDF on the course outline). These readings can be found in the Readings file in the course folder located at K:\JSavitsky\2018-2019\ECB 109-1 on the Cornell network. Please note that you need to be logged-onto the Cornell network to get access to the course folder and its contents.

Some of the additional readings can be found online (links provided on the course outline). For your convenience I have included in the Readings file in the course folder a Word document that includes links to the online readings.

Laptop Computer

You are required to have a laptop computer for this course. You should bring your laptop computer with you to class every time we meet.

We will be using the laptops in class to work on the data project (described below), to explore relevant internet sites, and to quickly access/refer to assigned readings during class discussions.

Those of you who do not own a laptop computer can borrow a laptop for the duration of the course from Matt Zhorne, Audiovisual Specialist. His office is 118 Cole Library.

It is possible to connect/map your personal laptop directly to shared network drives, including the K: drive mentioned above.

Directions for connecting/mapping **PCs** to network drives can be found at <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/information-technology/get-connected/shared-drives-student/windows.shtml> .

Directions for connecting/mapping **Macs** to network drives can be found at <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/information-technology/get-connected/shared-drives-student/mac-os-x.shtml> .

Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word

You must have access to Excel and Word to conduct and complete the data project (described below). These Microsoft applications might already be loaded on your laptop. If so, then you should be good to go. If not, then you have a couple of options for accessing and using these applications.

Cornell students are eligible to receive a free license for the complete Microsoft Office suite, which includes Excel and Word. See <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/information-technology/employee-discounts.shtml> for details. This option will allow you to load the Microsoft Office suite directly onto your laptop.

Another option for accessing and using Excel and Word is through the Virtual Labs utility. See [https://www.cornellcollege.edu/information-technology/virtual-labs/index.shtml](https://www.cornellcollege.edu/information-technology/virtual-labs/index.shtml%20) for directions on setting up access to the Virtual Labs utility. Virtual Labs provides remote access to a variety of software commonly employed at Cornell College, including but not limited to Excel, Word, PowerPoint, and a handful of statistical packages.

Data Project

A multi-part data project will be assigned this block. This project will require you to locate, analyze, discuss, and report federal-level and state-level crime rate statistics for the years 1990-2014. The first part of the project will focus on federal-level violent crime and property crime rates. The second part of the project will focus on federal-level/state-level comparisons of violent crime and property crime rates. Each part of the project will also require a short commentary (2-3 single-space pages) that describes and characterizes the crime rate data of interest.

The project will require you to employ Excel to organize the crime rate data, perform calculations, and prepare tables and charts. Jessica Johanningmeier, Quantitative Reasoning Studio Director, will visit class at **9:00 on the first Tuesday (8/28)** of the block and at **9:00 on the first Friday (8/31)** of the block to introduce you to some of the analysis and graphing capabilities of Excel and to guide you through the first part of the data project.

You will present a brief summary (5-10 minutes) of your work on the data project to the rest of the class on either the last Monday (9/17) or the last Tuesday (9/18) of the block.

Your work on the first part of the data project (federal-level analysis) will be submitted in electronic format at/by 5:00 PM on the second Wednesday (9/5) of the block. Your work on the second part of the data project (federal-level/state-level comparisons) will be submitted in electronic format at/by 5:00 PM on the third Friday (9/14) of the block.

Class Participation/Engagement

We will devote a substantial amount of class time to discussing the assigned readings. You are expected to contribute to these discussions in an informed, thoughtful manner. Your contributions to these discussions must be based on the assigned readings. Uninformed, personal opinions will not suffice. You should be ready, willing, and able to:

* identify and summarize the primary findings/claims/conclusions of the assigned readings
* determine if there is sufficient/convincing support (theoretical and/or empirical) for the primary findings/claims/conclusions of the assigned readings
* integrate/synthesize the assigned readings.

You should have paper copies or electronic copies of the assigned readings and a brief set of notes for each reading when you come to class.

At the end of the block you will be asked to evaluate and comment on your participation in the class discussions and on your engagement with the material covered in the course.

Quizzes

There will be at least three (3) and possibly four (4) in-class, timed quizzes this block. The timing (and number) of the quizzes will be determined as we move through the course. You will have at least a two-day advance notice for each quiz. The last quiz will be administered at 9:00 AM on the last Wednesday (9/19) of the block.

The first quiz will cover the class lectures on the introduction to economics. This quiz will be closed-book and closed-notes. The following quizzes will cover material from class lectures and discussions as well as from the reading assignments. For these quizzes you may consult the readings (either paper copies or electronic copies) and any notes you have taken on the readings. All quizzes will consist of short-answer essay questions.

Make-up quizzes will not be offered under any circumstances. An “excused absence” from one and only one of the first two (or three) quizzes may be offered under extreme circumstances, provided you **notify me in person prior** to your absence from the quiz. You may receive at most one “excused absence” from a quiz. Please note that awarding an “excused absence” from a quiz is entirely at my discretion. An “excused absence” from the last quiz will not be offered under any circumstances.

Tutors and Peer Consultants

Cornell's chapter of Omicron Delta Epsilon (ODE) makes tutors available for introductory ECB courses. The ODE tutor for this course is Ujjesa Dhanak (UDhanak19@cornellcollege.edu). Please get in touch with Ujjesa via her Cornell e-mail address to make arrangements for tutoring sessions if you think she might be of some assistance to you. Ujjesa has not taken this course. So, her ability to assist you with the course’s crime-related material might be somewhat limited after the first week of the course.

The Quantitative Reasoning Studio (located in the library) employs a number of peer consultants from a variety of majors, including ECB. The ECB majors who serve as peer consultants will be able to help you with the introductory economic concepts and arguments/models you will encounter this term. They might also be able to provide some assistance with the data project. However, please note that they will not in a position to help you with the course’s crime-related material.

Electronic Gizmos and Gadgets

**ALL** electronic gizmos and gadgets must be **TURNED OFF** and put away (completely out of sight and out of reach) during class. The only exception to this regulation is when we are using laptops to work on the data project or to reference/consult assigned readings. You are expected to remain “on task” when we are using laptops in class. Those who violate these regulations will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the session and will be penalized 25 quiz points at the end of the term for each occurrence.

Student Success Program

This first-year seminar (FYS) consists of two components: the course itself (as outlined above) and a student success component.

The student success component of your FYS extends beyond the first block, to encompass activities and reflection assignments throughout Blocks 1, 2, and 3.   Block 1 focuses on time management with an emphasis on helping you manage your academic responsibilities, campus involvement, and personal wellbeing.  Block 2 emphasizes civil discourse and intercultural literacy. Block 3 focuses on academic planning and future opportunities.

Student success assignments will comprise 20% of your final FYS grade.  These assignments will be evaluated by your FYS success instructor. You and your academic advisor will be informed of your preliminary in-progress grade at the end of Block 1 (which will not include student success assignments) and you will receive your final comprehensive grade at the end of Block 3.

**Evaluation of Student Success Assignments**

**ALL** of the following criteria must be met for each assignment in order to earn full credit (4 points):

* Attendance at associated meetings and activities
* Thorough and in-depth reflection on all but one question.  All questions must be addressed at more than a minimal level.
* The quality of writing does not limit understanding of the reflection.
* Answers are complete sentences and make sense without reading the question.

If any **ONE** of the following criteria is met, then the assignment earns minimal credit

(1 point).

* Inattentive or disruptive attendance (being late, not paying attention or not listening to others, talking to neighbors, sleeping, texting, rude comments, etc.)
* One or more of the responses does not or only minimally addresses the question
* The quality of writing limits the reader’s ability to understand the reflection
* Answers are not complete sentences or do not make sense without reading the question first.

Assignments falling in between these criteria will earn partial credit (2 points)

Failing to attend or failing to submit a reflection results in no credit (0 points).

See Assignment Rubrics for more details.

Without either prior approval or evidence of a serious emergency, late student success assignments will not be accepted.  If an extension is needed, please consult with your FYS success instructor prior to the assignment deadline.

**Options for Revising Student Success Assignments**

Student may revise up to 3 assignments for which they did not receive full credit.  Assignments from Block 3 are not eligible for revision.

For each revised assignment, the following must be completed:

* Students must have attended the relevant activities, participated appropriately, and submitted an initial assignment on time (or if given an extension, by the agreed upon deadline).
* Students must either work with a writing consultant or attend a writing studio workshop on revising their reflection.
* Students must review the rubric and comments provided by the FYS success instructor, make the relevant changes, and submit both a revised reflection and an overview of the revision indicating in bullet points how they addressed each of the concerns raised in the rubric and comments.
* Revisions must be submitted via Moodle within one week of the return of the assignment.

Seminar Grades

The final letter grade for the seminar will be determined by your course letter grade and your student success letter grade. The course letter grade will constitute 80% of the final letter grade for the seminar. The student success letter grade will constitute 20% of the final letter grade for the seminar. You will receive your course grade at the end of the first block. You will receive your student success grade and your final grade for the seminar at the end of the third block.

Your student success grade will be determined as outlined above.

Your course grade will be determined by your performance in the following areas:

* quizzes - 50% of course grade (each quiz will carry equal weight)
* data project (including end-of-block presentation) - 35% of course grade
* participation/engagement - 15% of course grade.

Academic Honesty

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College’s requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Compass, our student handbook, under the heading “Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work.” The Compass can be found at <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/student-affairs/compass/index.shtml> .

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.  Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format.  For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml> .

Course Outline/Readings

What follows is a very broad outline of the main topics and related readings we will cover in this course. Some topics may be dropped due to time constraints.

Readings denoted by PDF can be found in the course folder on the K: drive. Online readings can be found at the links provided. We will pick and choose among the readings as we move through the course.

1. Introduction to Economics

2. Crime Data and Preliminary Thoughts/Conjectures

Hellman and Alper, chapter 1

James Wilson, “Thinking About Crime,” *The Atlantic*, September 1983 ([link](https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/politics/crime/wilson.htm))

Oliver Marie, “Lessons from the Economics of Crime,” *CentrePiece*, Winter 2013/14, pp. 7-9. (PDF)

Dara Lind and German Lopez, “Why Did Crime Plummet in the United States?” *Vox*, January 19, 2016 ([link](https://www.vox.com/cards/crime-rate-drop/crime-rate))

Steven Levitt, “Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that Explain the Decline and Six that Do Not,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2004, pp. 163-190. (PDF)

Richard Freeman, “Why Do So Many Young American Men Commit Crimes and What Might We Do About It?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 1996, pp. 25-42. (PDF)

John Dilulio, “Help Wanted: Economists, Crime and Public Policy,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 1996, pp. 3-24. (PDF)

# Steven Levitt, “Abortion and Crime: Who Should You Believe?” *Freakonomics*, May 15, 2005 ([link](http://freakonomics.com/2005/05/15/abortion-and-crime-who-should-you-believe/))

Kevin Drum, “Lead: America’s Real Criminal Element,” *Mother Jones*, February 11, 2016 ([link](https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2016/02/lead-exposure-gasoline-crime-increase-children-health/))

3. Rational Choice Model of Criminal Behavior

Hellman and Alper, chapter 2 and chapter 3

Isaac Ehrlich, “Crime, Punishment, and the Market for Offenses,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* Winter 1996, pp. 43-67. (PDF)

4. Allocation of Criminal Justice Resources

Hellman and Alper, chapter 4

George Kelling and James Wilson, “Broken Windows,” *The Atlantic*, March 1982 ([link](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/))

Alex Tabarrok, “Police, Crime, and the Usefulness of Economics,” *Marginal Revolution*, December 13, 2012 ([link](https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2012/12/police-crime-and-the-usefulness-of-economics.html))

Gary Becker and Richard Posner, “Does America Imprison Too Many People?” *Becker-Posner Blog*, December 4, 2011 ([link - Becker](http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/2011/12/does-america-imprison-too-many-people-becker.html)) ([link - Posner](http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/2011/12/does-america-imprison-too-many-people-posner.html))

5. Crimes Against Persons

Hellman and Alper, chapter 6

John Donahue and Justin Wolfers, “The Death Penalty: No Evidence of Deterrence,” *Economists’ Voice*, April 2006 ([link](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/DonohueDeter.pdf))

Richard Posner, The Economics of Capital Punishment,” *Becker-Posner Blog*, December 18, 2005 ([link](http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/2005/12/the-economics-of-capital-punishment--posner.html))

Gary Becker, “More on the Economics of Capital Punishment,” *Becker-Posner Blog*, December 18, 2005 ([link](http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/2005/12/more-on-the-economics-of-capital-punishment-becker.html))

6. Crimes Against Property

Hellman and Alper, chapter 5

7. The Market for Illegal Drugs

Hellman and Alper, chapter 8

Wainwright, chapters 7-10

David Boaz, “Drug Legalization, Criminalization, and Harm Reduction,” *Cato Institute*, June 16, 1999 ([link](https://www.cato.org/congressional-testimony/drug-legalization-criminalization-harm-reduction))

David Mineta, “Decriminalization Would Increase the Use and the Economic and Social Costs of Drugs,” *Americas Quarterly* ([link](https://www.americasquarterly.org/node/1915))

Mai Szalavitz, “Cracked Up,” *Salon*, May11, 1999 ([link](https://www.salon.com/1999/05/11/crack_media/))

Tyler Cowen “Crime, Cocaine, and Marijuana,” *Marginal Revolution*, January 19, 2004 ([link](https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2004/01/crime_cocaine_a.html))

David Frum, “Marijuana Use is Too Risky a Choice,” *CNN*, January 7, 2013 ([link](https://www.cnn.com/2013/01/07/opinion/frum-marijuana-risk/index.html))

Stephen Dubner, “What Would Happen if Marijuana Were Decriminalized? A Freakonomics Quorum,” *Freakonomics*, May 22, 2009 ([link](http://freakonomics.com/2009/05/22/pot-quorum/))

Jeffrey Miron, “Could Legalizing All Drugs Solve America’s Opioid Epidemic?” *Fortune*, September 19, 2017 ([link](http://fortune.com/2017/09/19/jeff-sessions-opioid-epidemic-legalize-all-drugs/))

German Lopez, “I Used to Support Legalizing All Drugs. Then the Opioid Epidemic Happened,” *Vox*, September 12, 2017 ([link](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/4/20/15328384/opioid-epidemic-drug-legalization))

Gary Becker, Kevin Murphy, and Michael Grossman, “The Market for Illegal Goods: The Case of Drugs,” *Journal of Political Economy,* February 2006, pp. 38-60. (PDF)

IGM Forum, “Drug Use Policies,” December 12, 2011 ([link](http://www.igmchicago.org/surveys/drug-use-policies))