Econ 510
Topics in Environmental and Resource Economics
Spring MMXVII

Professor: Michael O'Hara
KRJH 131
859-4118
mohara@hamilton.edu

Meetings: TR 14:30 - 15:45
KRJH 101

Office Hours: TR 10:30 - 11:30, 16:00 - 17:00
(generally open door)

Course Overview:

This course is a study of the methods used in empirical research in environmental and natural resource economics. Students will read and analyze papers on topics such as pollution, carbon efficiency, non-market valuation, natural resource scarcity, and sustainability efforts of colleges and universities. The focus will be on conducting a systematic, transparent, and reproducible investigation into an empirical question through data visualization and econometric techniques, culminating in the senior research project.

Software

To assist us in making all analysis completely reproducible, our projects will be conducted using the R statistical package, the R Studio platform, and the R Markdown language. R Markdown allows users to integrate the writing of an empirical paper and the code that produces results into a single document, so that all commands used to produce the results in the paper are contained in the same document that produces the paper. It eliminates the need to cut and paste results from a software package into a document.

Readings:

There is no textbook for the course. Required readings will be announced. In some cases, you will have to find the article yourself. In cases in which the library does not have access to the resource, I will post the reading on Moodle. Most of your reading will be papers related to your own project.

Course schedule, readings, assignments, and other items of interest will be posted on the Blackboard system. When you login to Blackboard, you should see Econ 510 listed as one of your courses. If not, please make sure you get this set up in the first week of class. Emails to the class will be sent through Blackboard, so if you are not on it, you will not be informed.

Course Objectives:

This course is your capstone course in the economics curriculum. The focus is on producing a thesis paper of original research involving an economic analysis of an environmental or natural resource issue. Since there is a wide variety of experience in the class, we are going to come at this from several angles.

- Coverage of some basic concepts in environmental and resource economics
- Reading the literature in key areas of the field
- Learning proper empirical methods for investigating questions
- Communication and presentation of results

The culmination will be a thesis paper that must be professionally written and in an economics journal style. The empirical work must be fully documented so that its results can be replicated by a reader. This means that all data, code, and metadata must be supplied in the spirit of the TIER protocol which we will discuss in class.

Course Structure:

A seminar course is very different in tone and structure from other instructional courses in the curriculum. A seminar is a collaborative learning effort by all those involved. It is not the professor teaching the students, but rather the professor and students all learning together from each other. This means that there is far more responsibility on the part of the students to contribute to each other's learning. You and your fellow students (and I) are largely colleagues, though I will direct the course and have to assess your performance. Everyone is responsible for being prepared to contribute to class. Free riding is not tolerated.

Generally, we will alternate class periods between a day of discussing environmental economics concepts and papers that apply them, and a day of computer work to teach you skills for conducting empirical work. We will modify this as needed.

Grading:

20% – Class participation (in general discussion to which you are not assigned)

20% – Formal Presentations

20% – Assignments (computer assignments, research proposal, referee report, etc.)

40% – Final paper and presentation

In order to keep projects moving forward, I will be holding you to strict deadlines to reach certain stages of your projects. Missing these deadlines will result in grade penalties which will increase the longer the deadline is missed. Since in a seminar context, each person's performance has a significant impact on others, failure to be prepared for presentations or assignments will be penalized harshly.

Presentations/ Written Reports

There will be several opportunities to present during the semester. We will sort out the presentation schedule in class. Each may be more or less formal depending on circumstances. You will also likely lead discussion on readings, and I may have you present the work of another student.

Written assignments will include a referee report on a working paper, several drafts of your own paper, and referee reports on your classmates' papers.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Any form of academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly. All students are expected to abide by the Hamilton Honor Code, which can be found at
`http://http://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code`
Cheating in order to get a higher score on an exam will be a waste of the opportunity to learn tools that will be extremely useful to you in your college career and beyond.

Important dates during the semester (Subject to Change):

Wednesday, 25 Jan – Last day to add course (by 14:00)

Friday, 10 March – Last day to drop course

10 - 27 March – Spring Recess

Friday, 5 May– Last day of classes

Wed 10 May – Bealtaine

Students with Disabilities: Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive accommodations, you must provide appropriate documentation of your disability to Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021) if you have not done so already. I would be happy to discuss with you any specific needs you may have for the course, but all formal requests must go through the Dean's office; all discussions will remain confidential.