

ECON 3700 Writing as an Economist

Spring 2023

Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

Course website: <https://canvas.ust.hk/courses/444303>

Class meetings: 3rd February – 8th May 2023

Each week, students will attend the economics lecture and one language workshop.

Economics Lecture	Fri. 10:30-11:50am	LSK G012
Language Workshops	Mon. 10:30-11:50am (T1)	LSK 1026
	Mon. 12:00-1:20pm (T2)	
	Wed. 9:00-10:20am (T3)	

Instructors

Dr. Sujata VISARIA Department of Economics LSK 6083	Tel: 2358 7608 E-mail: svisaria@ust.hk	Office hours: TBA
Dr. Sylvia HON Center for Language Education Academic Building, Room 3388	Tel: 2358 7876 Email: lsylviahon@ust.hk	Office hours: By appointment

Economics Teaching Assistants

Emily K. CHEN Department of Economics LSK 6066	E-mail: eckuan@ust.hk	Office hours: Tues. 3:00-4:00pm
Peter Ka TSUI Department of Economics LSK 6066	Email: ecpeter@ust.hk	Office hours: Mon. 3:30-4:30pm

Language Teaching Assistants

Name here Center for Language Education Academic Building, Room	E-mail:	Office hours: By appointment
Name here Center for Language Education Academic Building, Room	Email:	Office hours: By appointment

Course description

This course aims to help you learn to think and write about economics with greater rigour and clarity, and to improve your ability to apply economic principles and methods to real-world phenomena.

Class time will be regularly devoted to discussing, drafting and revising assignments; and the small-class format of the language workshops allows for individual attention to writing. You will work with Dr. Visaria on interpreting and explaining data, applying economic principles and methods to daily life, building and supporting an argument, and evaluating different perspectives in scholarly debates; and with Dr. Hon on analysing texts, workshoping writing, and improving your ability to express an argument.

You will be asked to identify a meaningful problem from daily life, formulate an hypothesis, evaluate and select information to support your hypothesis, synthesize credible sources and evidence with your own arguments and reasoning, and take account of alternative explanations for, or challenges to your argument.

Your final essay will not be a research paper, but it will prepare you to better undertake research and writing in your future coursework or in your professional life.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

1. Evaluate empirical facts, distinguishing analytically between description, pattern

recognition/interpretation, and explanation; and appreciating how empirical analysis can help identify causal links.

2. Construct an economically grounded argument explaining a real-world phenomenon that formulates a specific question, takes account of the facts, demonstrates awareness of assumptions, and applies appropriate economic principles and methods.
3. Appreciate the role of evidence to support or disprove arguments; select, evaluate, and document sources and evidence, and use them effectively to test reasoning.
4. Recognize alternative explanations and empirical/theoretical challenges to an argument and incorporate them to either strengthen an argument or define its limitations.
5. Express ideas and arguments in writing clearly, precisely and engagingly, within the framework of economic logic.
6. Understand the expectations of different genres and how to adapt writing for different audiences, purposes, and contexts.
7. Give, receive and incorporate constructive feedback to improve thinking and writing.
8. Plan, develop and revise ideas, draft and rewrite texts using a process-based and reflective approach.

Pre-requisites

To enrol, you must have successfully completed at least the following courses or their equivalents, *or* be currently enrolled in them: LANG 1002 or LANG 1003; and LABU 2040; and *either* ECON 2103 or ECON 2113; and *either* ECON 2123 *or* ECON 3123.

Learning environment

- Classes will be held face-to-face on Fridays (economics lecture) and Mondays or Wednesdays (language workshops). You must enrol in one language workshop (T1, T2 or T3) and attend only that workshop each week.
- Lectures and workshops will be highly participatory and discussion-oriented. Your consistent and active engagement is important to make the course a success.

Attendance Policy

We expect all students to attend all economics lectures (Fridays) and one language workshop each week (you must attend the one you are enrolled in). Attendance will be recorded in every class. If you have to miss class, please email the relevant TAs (Language TAs to miss language workshop; Economics TAs to miss Economics lecture) ahead of time and provide a valid reason.

Learning resources

- Any slides, videos or other materials used for our class discussions will be posted on the [course website](#) on Canvas. Please note that these are not a substitute for attending class.
- We will also use the Canvas course website for announcements, to collect your assignments, and to post your scores. *Please set course notifications appropriately.*
- Readings will be placed on reserve at the library and / or made available through the course website. *The readings may be supplemented or altered as necessary; instructors will inform students of any changes.*
 - Akerlof, G. (1970). The market for 'lemons': Quality uncertainty and the market mechanism. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 84(3), 488–500.
 - Becker, G. B. & Elías, J. J. (2007). Introducing incentives in the market for live and cadaveric organ donations. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21(3), 3–24.
 - Bloom, N., & Van Reenen, J. (2010). Why do management practices differ across firms and countries? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 24(1), 203–224.
 - Bloom, N. et al. (2013). Does management matter? Evidence from India. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128(1), 1–51.
 - Booth, P. & Whyte, J. (2018). Debate: The pros and cons of carbon taxes. *Institute of Economic Affairs*. <https://iea.org.uk/debate-the-pros-and-cons-of-carbon-taxes/>
 - Frank, R. H. (2007). *The economic naturalist: In search of explanations for everyday enigmas*. New York: Basic Books.
 - Glaeser, E. L. (1998). Are cities dying? *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12(2), 139–160.

- Harford, T. (2012). *The undercover economist: Exposing why the rich are rich, the poor are poor—and why you can never buy a decent used car!* New York: Oxford.
- Murphy, R. P. (2014, February 3). Economists debate the minimum wage. *EconLib*, <https://www.econlib.org/library/Columns/y2014/Murphyminimumwage.html>.
- Silver, L. D. et al. (2017). Changes in prices, sales, consumer spending, and beverage consumption one year after a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages in Berkeley, California, US: A before-and-after study. *PLoS Medicine* 14(4), e1002283.
- Thaler, Richard H. (2018). From cashews to nudges: The evolution of behavioral economics.” *American Economic Review* 108(6), 1265–1287.

Academic honesty

Academic dishonesty is immoral and unfair, and we take a very serious view of it. You must be aware of [HKUST’s policy on academic integrity](#), and abide by its provisions. We will report all cases of suspected misconduct to the Dean’s Office, and their decision will be final and binding.

Please be especially careful not to plagiarize. **Plagiarism** is when you present someone else's work or ideas as your own, and it can be accidental or intentional. Students, academics and businesspersons who are caught plagiarizing face serious consequences such as failure, dismissal and legal action.

Plagiarism can be:

- Copying someone's words without giving them credit;
- Using someone's ideas or concepts without giving them credit;
- Misrepresenting someone’s ideas or concepts;
- Copying images or music without permission or without proper attribution;
- Citing incorrectly by citing the wrong source or having incomplete or inaccurate citations;
- Failing to acknowledge the contribution of others in work produced collaboratively.

Assignments

Your final assignment will be an individually-written 1250-word essay that provides a plausible argument to explain a puzzling real-world phenomenon in terms of one or more economic principles; acknowledges possible challenges to or limitations on its hypothesis; discusses how it might be tested empirically; and cites relevant data and/or scholarly discussions.

This essay will be developed in steps through the course. Along the way you will identify an initial question, provide a brief justification, sketch your argument, and develop an outline of your essay. Next you will produce an initial 750-word draft, and then revise and gradually lengthen it, integrating support for your argument and incorporating alternative viewpoints or addressing challenges.

You will also be asked to write a short analytic essay demonstrating your ability to describe, interpret and explain data.

Significant class time will be devoted to drafting, workshopping, and revising. You will be expected to provide thoughtful constructive critique to your classmates on economic content and reasoning, as well as clarity and grace of expression. You will have the opportunity to receive and respond to feedback from both instructors and peers.

Assignment grades will reward both effort and learning. We expect students’ work to respond to the reasoning and language points covered in class and to feedback on drafts. Grading rubrics will be provided for each major assignment.

Assessment scheme

Class Participation 10%

CILOs: 6, 7, 8

Grade depends on attendance, active participation in course activities: asking questions, contributing to discussion, completing pre-reading, and demonstrating engagement in peer review, drafting and workshopping.

Weekly Exercises 10%

CILOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Weekly writing tasks with evidence of effort & learning. Assessed exercises include chart description / interpretation, outlining the argument for your essay, multiple drafts of that essay and peer feedback form. Tasks should be completed on time and will be graded complete / not complete. These are marked with a * in course schedule below.

Short Analytic Essay 10%

CILOs: 1, 2, 5, 7, 8

A roughly 4 to 6 paragraph-essay focused on interpreting and explaining data, based on materials provided in class. Essay should show evidence of learning from Weeks 1 and 2 economics and language sections.

Question, Explanation of Puzzle, and Cribsheet

20% *CILOs: 2, 5, 6, 7, 8*

A question identifying an interesting economic puzzle you have observed, one paragraph (150-175 words) presenting your question and explaining why it constitutes an interesting economic puzzle; and a sketch of the argument structure. Submission should show evidence of learning from Weeks 3 through 6 economics section and Weeks 3, 5, and 6 language sections.

Outline of Final Essay

10% *CILOs: 2, 3, 5, 8*

Outline your argument explaining an economic puzzle based on your previously submitted cribsheet, responding to feedback received. The outline should show evidence of learning from Weeks 3 through 6 economics and language sections.

Peer Review of Final Essay Draft and Reflection

15% *CILOs: 1, 3, 4, 7*

Peer feedback on another student's draft 1000-word essay: deriving its argument; critiquing logic of argument, clarity of writing, and appropriateness and strength of cited evidence; tracing and checking APA formatting of citations; as well as a reflection on discussion of the written feedback with peer. Submission should show evidence of learning from entire course up to that point; particularly from Weeks 7 through 11 economics and language sections.

Final Essay 25%

CILOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8

A roughly 1250-word essay providing a plausible argument explaining the puzzling real-world phenomenon identified earlier, in terms of one or more economic principles. Final essays should include citations to relevant data and/or scholarly discussions; discussion of possible empirical tests of hypothesis, and acknowledgement of possible challenges to the hypothesis. Submission should show evidence of learning from the process of drafting and review that takes place throughout the course.

Course schedule

All assignments marked with a * will be graded complete / not complete. All assignments in *italics* will be graded for quality and evidence of learning.

Due: Underlined due 11:59pm; **bolded due Wed 10:30am (T1); Wed noon (T2); Fri 9am (T3); CAPS due Sat 10:30am (T1); Sat noon (T2); Mon 9am (T3).**

#Library workshop will take place in the E-Learning classroom B in the library.

Weekly exercises could change as the course progresses. Instructors will inform students of any changes.

Week	Dates	Economics Lecture			Dates	Language Workshops		
		Topic	Assignment	Due		Topic	Assignment	Due
1	Feb 3	Introduction; Facts (I)	Chart description / interpretation*	Feb 4	Feb 6/8	Workshop orientation; Writing about data (I)	Revised chart desc./interpret.*	Feb 8/10
2	Feb 10	Facts (II)	Argument write-up*	Feb 11	Feb 13/15	Writing about data (II)	<i>Short Analytic Essay</i>	Feb 15/17
3	Feb 17	Building an argument (I)	Short-answer quiz on assigned reading*	In-class	Feb 20/22	From cribsheet to outline (I)	Group cribsheet*	Feb 22/24
4	Feb 24	Building an argument (II)			Feb 27 / Mar 1	From cribsheet to outline (II) Developing an argument (I)	Group outline*	In-class
5	Mar 3	Defining a question to answer	Short-answer puzzle formulation*	In-class	Mar 6/8	Developing an argument (II)		
6	Mar 10	Refining the question & developing an argument	Draft question, explanation & cribsheet*	Mar 11	Mar 13/15	Making your own argument	<i>Question, Explanation of Puzzle & 'Cribsheet'</i>	Mar 15/17
7	Mar 17	Library workshop # Support for argument (I)	List of sources*	Mar 18	Mar 20/22	APA citation and formatting; outlining		
8	Mar 24	Support for argument (II)	<i>Outline of Final Essay</i>	MAR 25/27	Mar 27/29	Support for argument: citation		
9	Mar 31	Economic Debates (I)	Draft 750-word essay*	APR 1/3	Apr 3/12	Alternative explanations		
10	Apr 14	Economic Debates (II)			Apr 17/19	Testing argument empirically	Draft 1000-word essay*	Apr 19/21
11	Apr 21	No lecture	Draft peer review of final essay*	Apr 24/26 pre-workshop	Apr 24/26	Incorporating peer feedback	<i>Peer Review & Reflection</i>	Apr 26/28
12	Apr 28	Writing for different audiences			May 3/8	Writing Clinic (I) LANG		
13	May 5	Writing Clinic (II) ECON & LANG			N/A			
	Study Break		<i>Final Essay</i>	May 13				