I. LOCATOR INFORMATION

COURSE: ECON 430-D1; Economic Problems
CREDIT HOURS: 3 Semester Hours
MEETING TIME & PLACE: Online
INSTRUCTOR: Petur O. Jonsson
OFFICE LOCATION: 362 SBE Building
OFFICE PHONE: 910-672-1984
E-MAIL: pjonsson@uncfsu.edu
OFFICE HOURS TWR 9:00-11:40 a.m. and by appointment. *

MISSION STATEMENT: The School of Business and Economics is dedicated to providing quality business education to a diverse student population. The school prepares students to meet the challenges of a changing environment and to compete in a global market. This is accomplished by supplementing the University’s strong teaching emphasis with research and a curriculum that reflects changing market conditions. The school also assists in regional economic transformation by promoting entrepreneurial and economic education.

FSU Policy on Electronic Mail: Fayetteville State University provides to each student, free of charge, an electronic mail account (username@uncfsu.edu) that is easily accessible via the Internet. The university has established FSU email as the primary mode of correspondence between university officials and enrolled students. Inquiries and requests from students pertaining to academic records, grades, bills, financial aid, and other matters of a confidential nature must be submitted via FSU email. Inquiries or requests from personal email accounts are not assured a response. The university maintains open-use computer laboratories throughout the campus that can be used to access electronic mail. Rules and regulations governing the use of FSU email may be found at http://www.uncfsu.edu/PDFs/EmailPolicyFinal.pdf

* You are welcome to stop by my office at any time when I am there, even when I do not have formally scheduled office hours. If I am not the office, please leave a message with Mrs. Vivian Humphrey-Cogdell SBE 384 (672-1480) or send me an e-mail message, so that I can call you to set up an appointment.
II. COURSE DESCRIPTION
An in-depth study of current economic and social problems and their implications for business and society. Among the issues covered are: crime and the justice system, poverty, discrimination in labor markets, health care and social security, as well as government antitrust policies and regulation of markets.
Prerequisites: ECON 212, ECON 211

III. DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES
In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) of 1990, if you have a disability or think you have a disability to please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1st Floor); 910-672-1203.

IV. TITLE IX – SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
Fayetteville State University (University) is committed to fostering a safe campus environment where sexual misconduct — including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking - is unacceptable and is not tolerated. The University encourages students who may have experienced sexual misconduct to speak with someone at the University so that the University can provide the support that is needed and respond appropriately. The Sexual Misconduct policy can be found at the following link:
http://www.uncfsu.edu/Documents/Policy/students/SexualMisconduct.pdf

Consulting with a Health Care Professional - A student who wishes to confidentially speak about an incident of sexual misconduct should contact either of the following individuals who are required to maintain confidentiality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Office Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Dionne Hall</td>
<td>Licensed Professional Counselor</td>
<td>Spaulding Building, Room 167</td>
<td>(910) 672-2167 <a href="mailto:dhall9@uncfsu.edu">dhall9@uncfsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Linda Melvin</td>
<td>Director, Student Health Services</td>
<td>Spaulding Building, Room 121</td>
<td>(910) 672-1454 <a href="mailto:lmelvi10@uncfsu.edu">lmelvi10@uncfsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reporting an Incident of Sexual Misconduct - The University encourages students to report incidents of sexual misconduct. A student who wishes to report sexual misconduct or has questions about University policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct should contact the following individual:

Title IX Coordinator; Barber Building, Room 242
(910) 672-1141

Unlike the Licensed Professional Counselor or the Director of Student Health Services, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore cannot guarantee confidentiality, but a request for confidentiality will be considered and respected to the extent possible.

Students are also encouraged to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University’s Police and Public Safety Department at (910) 672-1911.
V. REQUIRED READINGS


Unfortunately these books are too inexpensive to qualify for the textbook rental system so you will have to buy your own copy of both books:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Think like a freak</em></td>
<td>Hardcover and kindle</td>
<td><a href="https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1443416517/ref=dp_olp_all_mbc?ie=UTF8&amp;condition=all">https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1443416517/ref=dp_olp_all_mbc?ie=UTF8&amp;condition=all</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Think like a freak</em></td>
<td>Trade Paperback</td>
<td><a href="https://www.amazon.com/Think-Like-Freak-Auto.../dp/0062218344">https://www.amazon.com/Think-Like-Freak-Auto.../dp/0062218344</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the course of the semester you will be asked (1) to read both of these books, (2) participate in discussion boards that will be set for the chapters of these books, (3) write a series of short summary essays on the material at hand, and (4) complete two different term papers.

VI. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

George Santayana, the great Spanish-American Philosopher, once wrote that “Scepticism is the chastity of the intellect.” Santayana’s point: we should nurture our reason and our critical ability to evaluate things for ourselves before we accept conventional wisdom.

Both of the books (Freakonomics and Think Like a Freak) that we are reading this semester challenge conventional wisdom. Levitt and Dubner, the authors of these two books, suggest that most people tend to accept conventional wisdom without thinking critically about the various issues at hand and that as a result a lot of what we think we know and take for granted is simply incorrect.

Both of these books focus on a number of different, and in some cases highly controversial, issues. We want you to read the books critically, forming your own opinions on the issues without necessarily agreeing with all the points being made by the books, and then we want you to engage in critical reviews, analysis, and discussions on this issues at hand.

In short, the primary learning goal of this course is for you to sharpen your critical thinking on a variety of economic and social issues. We want the course to promote your intellectual engagement and open-minded exploration of the issues through critical discussions. Given the nature of the course, some of the topics that we will consider are both sensitive and controversial. With that in mind, I ask that all of us make an effort to create and maintain a friendly and tolerant environment in which we are all respectful, cordial and civil even when we may disagree. The bottom line is that we want everyone to feel free to engage with the rest of us in expressing and making the case for a variety of different perspectives.

That said, among the specific learning goals of the course, upon successful completion of the course you should be able to:

- Explain the nature of incentives and their effect on economic behavior.
- Explain the context of incentives vs. cheap talk in economic choices.
- Explain how control of information affects economic decisions in a variety of different contexts.
- Explain and apply evidence based reasoning in evaluating a number of unexpected and counterintuitive facts related to economic and social issues.

VII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Note that since this is a writing intensive course you will be asked to complete a series of writing assignments which will call on you to reflect on the arguments of the two books that we are using in this course. These writing assignments may call on you to summarize and evaluate controversial arguments and may also ask you to come up with examples and/or counter-examples to support your views. These writing assignments will fall into 3 different categories as outlined below:
Short Writing Assignments: You will be asked to complete a number of short writing assignments. These assignments will be on the form of chapter summaries and/or specific questions based on a chapter in one of the two books. These assignments will be worth up to 100 adjusted points total.

The adjusted points for the writing assignments will be calculated as follows: Each assignment will generate up to 10 unadjusted points. At the end of the semester we will add up the points that you received for all of your assignments and then we will adjust the overall grade so that the adjusted points will range from 0 to 100. Specifically, we will have 16 assignments, each with up to 10 unadjusted points for a sum total of 160 possible unadjusted points. The adjusted points will then be found by dividing the sum of your unadjusted scores by 1.6, since 160/1.6=100.

Note that all the assignments for the semester will be posted by January 20th and you are free to complete them as soon as they are posted. That said, there are four strict final deadlines: Assignments 1-4 are due no later than February 10th; Assignments 5-7 are due no later than March 5th; Assignments 8-12 are due no later than April 5th; Assignments 13-16 are due no later than May 4th.

Term Paper Assignments: You must also write two short papers that you submit as turnitin assignments in Canvas. Each of the papers will be worth up to 50 points. Note that these two papers will be reviewed for plagiarism using turnitin.com, so it is very important that you pay close attention to the term paper guidelines that are posted in Canvas.

Note that the 1st paper is due no later than March 5th and the 2nd paper is due no later than May 4th.

Discussion Board Participation: You will also receive up to 100 points (or potentially even more than that, since I reserve the right to give some extra bonus points for particularly good examples or for especially well reasoned contributions to the discussion boards).

We will set up 4 different discussion boards based on the the content of the two books. You can contribute to the discussions either by starting a thread, or else by commenting on a thread that was started by someone else. As for the discussion, we welcome disagreements and contrary opinions in the forums: just remember that even as we disagree we want to remain civil and respectful of each other.

The points for discussion board participation will be calculated as follows: Each discussion forum will generate up to 25 points. Your score in each forum will be based both (1) on the quality of your posts and your responses along with (2) how actively you interact with the other posters in each forum.

To receive all the 25 points for a discussion board, you generally need a minimum of at least three significant original contributions to the board in question plus continuing additional interactions with other posters over time. In other words, you need to respond to posts made by others, especially if these posts challenge or reinforce posts that you originally made. Note that for a post to count as a significant contribution, it must elaborate a new point, perspective or argument supported by logic and/or specific examples.
Note that while you must post your first contribution in each board by a deadline (February 10th for Board 1; March 5th for Board 2; April 5th for Board 3; May 4th for Board 4) all four discussion boards will be open discussions and contributions through May 10th.

**Letter Grades:** Adding the assignment, paper and discussion scores yields a total overall score on a scale from 0-300 (or hypothetically even more than 300 based on possible bonus points that you may earn as discussed above). This score will then be transformed into letter grades as follows.

- A for 270-300+ Points
- B for 240-269 Points
- C for 210-239 Points
- D for 180-209 Points
- F for 0-179 Points

**VIII. ACADEMIC SUPPORT RESOURCES**

Here are a few interesting websites and blogs with different perspectives on a variety of economic and social issues and problems:

Freakonomics Blog:  
http://freakonomics.com/

The Mises Institute’s Austrian Economics Wire:  
https://mises.org/wire

Center for Economic and Policy Research:  
http://cepr.net/

Cowen and Tabarrok’s Marginal Revolution Blog:  
http://marginalrevolution.com/

Dan Ariely’s Blog:  
http://danariely.com/category/blog/

**IX. COURSE OUTLINE**

The details and the timing outlined below are subject to change based on the needs and interests of the class. Any changes will be updated in the syllabus and announced both via email and also announcements in Canvas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates, Topics and Issues and Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is an online course so we want to make things as flexible as possible for you and allow you to complete the requirements of the course at your own pace with the following caveats:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  (1) X-grades for non-attendance will be assigned on **January 25th**, so if you have not participated in the course at all by that date, you will be assigned an X-grade. Note that |
the X-grade is strictly informational and that as long as you do finish the rest of the work on schedule an initial X-grade will not affect your final grade directly.

(2) Your work related to topics 1 through 4 (i.e, Assignments 1-4 along with initial posts in the relevant discussion boards) must be completed by **February 10th**.

(3) Your 1st term paper and your work related to topics 5 through 7 (i.e, Assignments 5-7 along with initial posts in the relevant discussion boards) must be completed by **March 5th**.

(4) Your work related to topics 8 through 12 (i.e, Assignments 8-12 along with initial posts in the relevant discussion boards) must be completed by **April 5th**.

(5) Your work related to topics 13 through 16 (i.e, Assignments 13-16 along with initial posts in the relevant discussion boards) must be completed by **May 4th**.

Aside from these deadlines you are free to submit assignments and papers on your own schedule. In particular, if you wish, you can focus intensively on this course and finish all your work for the course well before the end of the semester. This would then leave you with some free time for your other courses for the remainder of the semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic No. 1</th>
<th>Introduction and Overview of the Issues of the Course (Read the introduction to Levitt &amp; Dubner’s <em>Freakonomics.</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 2</td>
<td><em>Freakonomics</em> Chapter 1: Discovering cheating as applied to teachers and sumo wrestlers, as well as a typical Washington DC area bagel business and its customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 3</td>
<td><em>Freakonomics</em> Chapter 2: Information control as applied to the Ku Klux Klan and real-estate agents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 4</td>
<td><em>Freakonomics</em> Chapter 3: The economics of drug dealing, including the surprisingly low earnings and abject working conditions of crack cocaine dealers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignments 1-4 (based on topics 1-4) should be completed and turned in by Feb. 10th, 2017</strong></td>
<td>These assignments will still be open for ten days beyond this deadline, but will worth one point (or 10%) less for each day that they are late. So by February 21st these assignments will be worth zero points and thus will no longer be available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 5</td>
<td><em>Freakonomics</em> Chapter 4: The role legalized abortion has played in reducing crime, contrasted with the policies and downfall of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 6</td>
<td><em>Freakonomics</em> Chapter 5: The negligible effects of good parenting and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 7</td>
<td><em>Freakonomics</em> Chapter 6: The socioeconomic patterns of naming children (nominative determinism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term Paper No. 1 and Assignments 5-7 should be completed and turned in by March 5th, 2017.</strong></td>
<td>The paper and assignments will still be open for ten days beyond this deadline, but will lose 10% of their value for each day that they are late. So by March 16th these assignments and term paper will be worth zero points and thus will no longer be available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 8</td>
<td><em>TLF (Think Like a Freak)</em> Chapter 1: What Does It Mean to Think Like a Freak?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 9</td>
<td><em>TLF</em> Chapter 2: The Three Hardest Words in the English Language; “I don’t know” (i.e., We shouldn’t Pretend to Know Things We do not Know)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 10</td>
<td><em>TLF</em> Chapter 3: What’s Your Problem? (i.e., Asking the Right Question)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 11</td>
<td><em>TLF</em> Chapter 4: Like a Bad Dye Job, the Truth is in the Roots. (or, Getting to the Root of the Correct Answers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic No. 12</td>
<td><em>TLF</em> Chapter 5: Think Like a Child (or, Don’t be Afraid of the Obvious)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignments 8-12 should be completed and turned in by April 5th, 2017.
These assignments will still be open for ten days beyond this deadline, but will worth one point (or 10%) less for each day that they are late. So by April 16th these assignments will be worth zero points and thus will no longer be available.

| Topic No. 13 | TLF Chapter 6: Like Giving Candy to a Baby (or, How Incentives Really Work and What They Can and Cannot do) |
| Topic No. 14 | TLF Chapter 7: What do King Solomon and David Lee Roth Have in Common (or, Thinking Like a Game Theorist) |
| Topic No. 15 | TLF Chapter 8: How to Persuade People who do Not Want to be Persuaded (or, How People Really form their Opinions) |
| Topic No. 16 | TLF Chapter 9: The Upside of Quitting (or, Understanding What is, and What isn’t, Worth Pursuing) |

Term Paper No. 2 and Assignments 13-16 should be completed and turned in by May 4th, 2017.
The paper and assignments will still be open for ten days beyond this deadline, but will lose 10% of their value for each day that they are late. So by May 15th these assignments and term paper will be worth zero points and thus will no longer be available.

X. TEACHING STRATEGIES
This is an online course. The course relies on open-ended and interactive conversations on the issues at hand. Since we do not have any formal meetings, we will use discussion boards for our discussions and interchanges on the material on hand. All students are required to read the relevant chapters and submit short answers based on each chapter and also participate in discussion boards that will be set up for the issues at hand. The course will rely heavily on student input derived from the discussion boards. Accordingly, even though there is a given list of topics to be covered, the students will have some say in how each of these topics is handled.

XI. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Rosenzweig, P. *The Halo Effect: ... and the eight other business delusions that deceive managers*. Free Press, 2009.


