



LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY
APPLETON, WISCONSIN 54912

COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEMS (ECON215)
WINTER 2009
ÁDÁM GALAMBOS

Syllabus

Meeting time: MWF 1:50 – 3:00

Room: Briggs 224

Instructor: Ádám Galambos, Briggs 212, 832-6667, adam.galambos@lawrence.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 3:00 to 4:00 and Thursdays 11:00 – 12:00, and by appointment.

Course blog: <http://comecon.blogspot.com>

Course website: On Moodle.

Course description

Interest in alternative ways of organizing economic activity goes back to antiquity. What are the goals of economic activity, and how are these ends attained? How is it decided what is to be produced? How are the fruits of economic activity distributed? These are questions every particular *economic system* answers. In this course, we will study the nature of these questions and how particular economic systems answer them. Are some economic systems superior to others? Are there necessary relationships between the economic and the political systems of a society? These questions were passionately debated at crucial historic times, and are passionately debated today as the worldwide economic crisis drives many to look for alternatives to the current form of capitalism. We will study and evaluate arguments made in historical and contemporary debates. The goal of this course is to learn to see the different aspects of economic systems, and to understand their roles.

Class format

Classes will be based on discussing the readings. It is therefore essential that each student comes to class prepared to contribute to discussing the reading. A significant part of the course grade will be determined by contribution to these discussions. Also, each student will be required to write a paper, and to work as a member of a team on a presentation.

Readings

This is a reading intensive course. Many of the required readings are collected in a course packet for your convenience. Several chapters from *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* by David S. Landes will be required, and therefore I recommend that you own a copy of that book. In addition, *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff* by Arthur M. Okun is required. We will not regularly use a textbook, but a textbook on the subject is on reserve at the Library for reference.

A number of the readings will be on the course webpage on Moodle. In addition I will occasionally post relevant links and comments on the course blog. You are welcome and encouraged to post new entries on the blog by emailing them to galambos1234.compeconblog@blogger.com.

Exam, term paper and presentation, reaction papers

There will be an in-class midterm exam on May 6th. Instead of a final exam, each student will have to work on a team presentation with two others. Teams will be organized around topics in the fourth week of the course. Teams will assign subtopics for each member, and everyone will have to write an 8–10 page paper on his/her subtopic. These papers will be due on Monday, June 1st at 1:00pm. Each student must submit a brief (half-page) description of their subtopic by Wednesday, April 29th. Team presentations will take place in the last week of classes.

In addition, reaction papers will be due on Mondays and Fridays. These one-page papers will be well thought out and well crafted reactions to the readings to be discussed in class. They must not contain any summary or restatement of any part of the reading — only reactions to it. A good reaction paper will demonstrate that you have not only read the assigned material but you have also intellectually engaged with it. Your reaction paper should also contain the seeds of potential discussion topics that you would be interested in pursuing.

All written work in this course must be submitted on Moodle, and formatted double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and 12-point font.

No late assignments will be accepted, except if you are prevented from completing your assignment by an unforeseen and documented circumstance.

Grading

The various assignments in this course will carry the following weights in your course grade:

Midterm exam	14%
Paper topic proposal	3%
8–10 page paper	14%
Presentation	5%
Participation	10%
Reaction papers	54%.

Specifically, all reaction papers before the midterm will account for 30% of your grade (that's about 3% each), and all reaction papers after the midterm will account for 24% of your grade (that's about 4% each).

Final grades will be determined individually for each student according to the following scale:

92-100	A
90-91	A-
88-89	B+

82-87	B
80-81	B-
78-79	C+
72-77	C
70-71	C-
68-69	D+
62-67	D
60-61	D-
-59	F

I reserve the right to revise this scale downwards by uniformly increasing the band for each grade.

Honor Code

As with all classes at Lawrence University, the Honor Code applies to all activities related to this class. Please reaffirm the Honor Code on all written work. The reaction papers and the term paper must be entirely your own work, and any sources you use must be appropriately acknowledged.

I hope you will enjoy the class, and please contact me with any questions or concerns.