

EC 485: Economics of Education

Section 001: MW 8:30 AM – 9:50 AM

110 Berkey Hall

Instructor

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Office Hours: Monday 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Wednesday 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Course Description

This course provides students with an overview of the economic theory and empirical research in the field of education, including returns to education, teacher quality, peer effects and tracking, school choice and accountability, and college access and financial aid. The aim of the course is to provide you with a broad understanding of the economic issues in education, to inform you of current research to make judgments about various education policies, and to enable you to make cogent and effective arguments about new policy recommendations.

For each topic, we will examine the relevant economic theory – who are the agents, what are their incentives, what costs do they face, how do they act on the margin – and describe the predicted outcomes. We will then investigate empirical research on the topic, with an emphasis on causal identification, and assess the assumptions and validity of the science. Finally, we will learn what the science has concluded and compare it with what we predicted.

Pre-requisites: EC 301 or EC 251H and completion of a Tier I Writing Requirement

Credit Hours: 3

Course Objectives

After completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe key concepts and results in the economics of education literature
- Interpret data using common empirical strategies
- Critically analyze the validity of economic theory and empirical results
- Construct and defend education policy using theory and data

Required Text

Lovenheim and Turner, *Economics of Education*, 1st Edition (ISBN: 9780716777045)

Course Grade Components

Assignment	Weight
Participation	10%
Weekly Assignments	25%
Writing Assignment	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%

Participation

Discussions are an important component of learning, as they facilitate peer teaching and help me identify areas where students are struggling. Students are expected to attend each class on time and prepared to speak on any assigned readings. A student's participation grade will be based on their overall attendance and contribution to class discussions. To receive full credit, a student must attend almost every class and frequently be a valuable participant. To receive passing credit, a student must attend half of class meetings and contribute to the class discussions more than once.

Weekly Assignments

After most Wednesday classes, I will assign students brief assignments on D2L. These weekly assignments serve three purposes. First, repetition is one of the best ways to learn, and the weekly assignment will reinforce material covered in class. Second, the assignments will help students improve their writing ability and facilitate the writing of their semester writing assignment. Finally, like class participation, they help me identify areas where students are struggling.

I will grade weekly assignments on their content and writing mechanics/style. To help students prepare for the semester writing assignment, I will grade these weekly assignments with the same rigor as the semester writing assignment. On occasion, these weekly assignments will focus solely on developing your semester writing assignment, satisfying the "variety in writing experience" requirement of the Tier II writing requirements in the College of Social Science.

Writing Assignment

Students will complete an expository writing assignment analyzing an education policy or event with the tools taught in class. Students can choose any policy or event that interests them, as long as it relates to education. A good essay will summarize the policy or event, explain the expected outcome using economic theory, provide evidence that

supports their prediction, and discuss any limitations of their theory or evidence. I do not expect students to find their own data; I do expect students to reference the research discussed in class or find supplementary research online.

I will not impose a word minimum – good writing is concise writing – but your essay should sufficiently address all of the aforementioned subjects. Essays should not be more than four pages in length. I will not read past your fourth page.

Submissions must be in Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, with 1 inch margins on each side (the default in Microsoft Word). This is to help me grade – serif fonts like Times New Roman are quicker to read than sans-serif fonts (i.e., Calibri) – and consistent font size, spacing, and margins allow me to quickly check the length of your essay. Students will be penalized 3 points for not adhering to this format.

Essays must be submitted to D2L's Turnitin module. Late submissions will be penalized by five points per day, beginning 8:01AM on Wednesday, April 17. Any essay found to have plagiarized existing work will receive a grade of zero.

Final Grade Distribution

Minimum Grade Required	4-Point Course Grade
90%	4.0
85%	3.5
80%	3.0
75%	2.5
70%	2.0
65%	1.5
60%	1.0

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (e.g., exam date). We may not be able to honor requests received after this date

Exam Rescheduling Policy

For reasons that can be anticipated (e.g., university-sponsored events, religious observances), an alternative midterm exam time will be set for a time before the

scheduled exam. Notice must be given in writing at least one week before the scheduled exam. No make-up midterm exams will be provided after the original scheduled exam for reasons that can be anticipated.

For reasons that cannot be anticipated (e.g., sickness, family emergency), a make-up midterm exam will be provided in a timely fashion. Verifiable documentation must be provided for reasons that cannot be anticipated (e.g., doctor's note, travel receipt). No make-up midterm exams will be provided after the exam date without documentation.

Per Academic Programs – General Information, Policies, Procedures and Regulations,

A student absent from a final examination without a satisfactory explanation will receive a grade of 0.0 on the numerical system, NC on the CR-NC system, or N in the case of a course authorized for grading on the P-N system. Students unable to take a final examination because of illness or other reason over which they have no control should notify the associate deans of their colleges immediately.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Per General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, no student shall:

- 1.01 claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.
- 1.02 procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
- 1.03 complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
- 1.04 allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
- 1.05 alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
- 1.06 fabricate or falsify data or results.

Any student found in violation of this policy will automatically receive a failing grade for the relevant assignment. Additional grade penalties, up to and including failure of the course, may be assessed depending on the severity of the action. Furthermore, in accordance with University policy, I must submit an Academic Dishonesty Report to the student, the student's dean, and the Dean of Undergraduate studies. An Academic Dishonesty Report will remain on a student's academic record unless the student successfully grieves the allegation, the instructor filing the report requests it be removed, or upon conferral of the student's degree if only one report has been filed, the student has successfully completed the required course on academic integrity, and no additional sanctions were requested by the instructor.

Important dates

Date	Topic
Monday, January 7	First day of class
Monday, January 21	University holiday, class cancelled
Wednesday, February 27	Midterm exam – 8:30AM in 110 Berkey Hall
Monday, March 4 and Wednesday, March 6	Spring break, class cancelled
Wednesday, April 17	Semester writing assignment due – 8AM on D2L
Wednesday, April 24	Final day of class
Monday, April 29	Final exam – 7:45AM in 110 Berkey Hall

Note: All contents of the syllabus are subject to change; however, notice will be given to the class and an updated syllabus will be provided online.