Issues in Economic Freedom: How a Topics Course Can Popularize the Dismal Science

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Why Economic Freedom?

- attractive to majors and non-majors in economics
- contemporary issues that have personal significance
- can more easily and effectively illustrate principles of economic reasoning while honing critical listening, thinking, speaking, and writing skills
- a course that can explore the connection of economic freedom to innovation, entrepreneurship, prosperity and equality
- relationship between economic freedom and public polices can be illustrated through current economic events such as stimulus spending, taxation, government regulation, unemployment, price controls, education, healthcare, social welfare, environmental concerns and international trade

Topics covered

- the rule of law, market efficiency, definitions of equity, the relevance of incentives, opportunity cost, freedom of choice and contract, assumption of risk, the role of prices, the burden of taxation, the nature of competition, the size of government, property rights, income redistribution versus wealth creation, and regulatory pressures on business enterprises

Teaching Economic Freedom

Course Materials

- Free to Choose A Personal Statement by Milton & Rose Friedman
- Video series to accompany Free to Choose
- Economic Issues & Policy by Jacqueline Murray Brux
- Hernando De Soto on economic development
- Online components utilizing course management technology
- Selected videos on current events and issues
- Invited guest speakers

Course Assessment

Method	Weight (%)
Video Journaling	20%
Weekly Assignment	20%
Article Assessment	40%
Contribution	10%
Letter to the Editor	10%

The Realms of Experience

Classroom experience by engaging students personally on various levels:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Intellectual

What students think?

Student Survey Questions	Positive Response
Would recommend course to a classmate	100%
Challenging questions, problems and assignments	90%
Assignments required critical thinking	90%
Challenged me to do my best work	90%
Assignments contributed to learning	90%
Course provoked curiosity in economic issues	90%
Use of videos and guest speakers contributed to my learning	85%
Used current examples and illustrations	80%

Students' comments

- I am more enthusiastic about economics
- One of the most fascinating classes I have ever taken
- Provided a good foundation for understanding economic freedom
- Should be a required class for everyone
- I am more likely to discuss economic issues with my friends
- I can write an effective letter to the editor!
- Relates economics to current events and public policies
- Hope the class will be offered regularly
- Sign me up!

Challenges

- A broad range of topics can be covered, need to narrow focus
- Student knowledge and familiarity with economic reasoning prior to the course
- Outdated current events, public policies and topics in textbooks
- Cross-disciplinary nature of the course
- Keep an environment conducive to openness and respect of various views and opinions while discussing controversial issues such as the minimum wage, poverty, inequality, healthcare, etc.
- Able to foment spirited discussion, but fell behind schedule
- Identifying pedagogies to encourage student participation and debate

Advice

- Promote course prior to student registration
- Encourage both majors and non-majors in economics to enroll in the course
- Identify topics that are interesting to a wide range of majors such as business, political science, social entrepreneurship, international relations
- Pre-screen and select videos
- Schedule guest speakers in advance
- Include interactive learning activities
- Provide course resources that reflect differing view s
- Encourage persuasive writing and Letter to the Editor submissions