

Passed 11/19/11

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) component of General Education Economics Department Plan

I. Goals

As stated in the 1998-99 catalog, the B.A. degree program in economics is designed to provide students with a firm grounding in modern economic theory, a basic descriptive knowledge of the U.S. and world economy, and the capability to engage in quantitative research and independent thought. Student writing provides an effective tool in meeting these goals and is also an essential skill for students engaged in independent research.

Upon completing their degree program in economics, students should have the necessary writing skills to describe the assumptions and predictions associated with economic theory, the application of theory to real-world issues, and the institutional structure of modern economies. In addition, students should be able to use writing to synthesize, compare, and analyze alternative theories and applications, and to support their opinions about competing ideas. Finally, our students' writing should be clear, complete, and concise.

II. Objectives

Economics majors will be required to take five approved writing courses. At least four of these courses must be completed in economics courses. Majors will fulfill their lower-division writing requirement by successfully completing an approved Basic Skills Critical Thinking course with a significant writing component. This course may be taken outside the economics department, but must be included in the writing plan of the department that it is taken in. At this time courses that meet these criteria are ECO 111, POL 203, MGT 210, PHL 101, and HIS 200. As other critical thinking courses that meet these criteria are approved by the General Education board they can be added to the department's writing plan.

The second and third courses in the writing plan, ECO 300 (Intermediate Macroeconomics) and ECO 301 (Intermediate Microeconomics), are part of the department's core curriculum. The final two courses may be selected from a list of approved upper-division departmental electives. These courses are listed and described in Appendix 1.

Requiring majors to take the majority of their writing courses within the department ensures that they will develop their writing skills while they learn different areas of the discipline. The completion of a lower-division English course and a lower-division writing class will ensure that students enter the upper-division writing courses with necessary core writing skills.

III. Criteria for writing courses

All writing courses must involve writing assignments with timely feedback and the

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opportunity for revision. When applicable, writing assignments should conform to some accepted style guide, such as MLA or the Chicago Manual of Style. The frequency, length, and weighting of writing assignments shall be left to the discretion of the instructor provided they meet a set of minimum parameters. These minimum parameters are:

1. writing assignments must constitute at least 20% of all graded material, and
2. there must be the possibility of revision in the writing assignments.

IV. Timetable for student completion.

Because writing skills are subject to atrophy, the economic department's writing plan attempts to create a continuum of writing opportunities. In their first year, students should take ENG 102 and a writing-intensive critical thinking course. In addition, they will take ECO 101, Principles of Microeconomics, and ECO 200, Principles of Macroeconomics. While these courses typically do not have a significant writing component, they will prepare students to take ECO 300 and ECO 301, the core theory courses, in their second year. The final two writing courses can be distributed between the final two years of study.

In addition to the courses taken as part of the department's writing plan, we anticipate that most of our majors will take additional upper-division writing courses outside of the major. Many of our students have either minors or second majors in other departments, and will thus have additional opportunities to write in related fields.

V. Summary

The economic department's writing plan is designed to provide our majors with the opportunity to continuously improve their writing skills by engaging in different types of writing throughout their program. Students will take one lower-division writing seminar either within or outside the major. This course should also fill the Basic Skills Critical Thinking component of the general education program. Following the lower-division writing class our majors will take four upper-division writing courses offered within the department. Two of these courses will be ECO 300 and ECO 301, both of which are part of the department's core requirements. The other courses will be selected under advisement. Under the plan students will be encouraged to avoid significant hiatuses between writing courses.

Appendix 1. Courses

The following are a list of writing courses to be offered by the department along with the writing requirements for those courses. As new courses are developed they may be added to the department's approved list.

ECO 111: Critical Thinking in Economics

Because writing is central to the development of critical thinking skills students will be required to complete frequent essay assignments either critically evaluating another writer's work, or constructing their own arguments. Individual essay lengths will vary according to the demands of the topic, as will the frequency of assigned essays. It is safe to assume that students will be writing on a weekly basis. At least 30% of the grade in this course will derive from written assignments.

ECO 300: Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on current issues in the United States economy that deal with course topics. Assignments will be 3 to 6 typewritten pages. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure, and organization, and the student's command of economic analysis. All assignments will include the opportunity for feedback and revision. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total course grade.

A sample semester might include a first paper summarizing and analyzing an article about the current state of the United States economy, including a discussion of current inflation, unemployment, and growth rates and possible factors responsible for the state of the U.S. economy. A second paper could discuss issues surrounding economic growth, such as the role of population changes and technological innovation. A third paper could discuss the globalization of the U.S. economy and the impact of fluctuations of currency values on imports and exports.

Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics may vary with the interests and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 301: Intermediate Microeconomic Theory

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on current issues in the United States economy that deal with course topics. Assignments will be 3 to 6 typewritten pages. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure, and organization, and the student's command of economic analysis. All assignments will include the opportunity for feedback and revision. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total course grade.

A sample semester might include a first paper summarizing and analyzing an article that illustrates the problem of scarcity and the tradeoffs that result. A second paper could involve identifying and describing the key factors related to the demand and supply of a particular good or service. A third paper could compare and contrast different market structures and identify actual firms and markets that are competitive, oligopolies, and monopolies.

Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics may vary on the interests and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 312: Econometrics

Students in this course are required to complete a term research project paper which should include a theoretical analysis and an empirical test of it. Although there are no restrictions as long as the paper is self contained, a typical paper may be around 10 typed pages. Students submit one- or two-page proposals for the paper, which is subject to approval by the instructor. There will be interactions between students and the instructor regarding the feasibility and the progress of the project. The paper will carry approximately 30% of the course grade.

ECO 320: Comparative Economic Systems

This course will have 2 to 4 writing assignments based on the theoretical, empirical, and policy issues concerned with comparative economic systems. Papers will be 3 to 6 typewritten pages. All assignments will require feedback and revision. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure and organization, and the student's command of economic analysis. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total grade for the course.

A sample semester might include a first paper summarizing the current state of economic theory on comparative systems, a second paper examining in greater detail the organization of a particular economic system (capitalist, for example), a third paper on the economics of transition using articles from development and transition journals as sources, and a capstone paper drawing from the topics covered in the three previous papers.

The number of assignments and the grading weight listed above serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course. Topics may vary according to the preferences and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 322: History of Economic Doctrines

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on the theoretical, empirical, and policy issues concerned with the history of economic doctrines and their relevance to current economic theories and policies. Papers will be 6 to 8 typewritten pages, with

a final research paper of 12 to 15 pages. All assignments will require feedback and revision. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure and organization, and the student's command of economic and historical analysis. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 50% of the total grade for the course.

A sample semester might include a first paper summarizing economic theories prior to Adam Smith, a second paper examining classical political economy from Smith to Karl Marx, a third paper on the rise of marginalist economics, a fourth on the rise of formalism and mathematics in economics, and a capstone paper drawing from the topics covered in the four previous papers.

The number of assignments and the grading weight listed above serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course. Topics may vary according to the preferences and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 324: Economics and Social Institutions

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on the theoretical, empirical, and policy issues concerned with the interrelationships between economic and social institutions. Papers will be 3 to 6 typewritten pages. All assignments will require feedback and revision. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure and organization, and the student's command of economic analysis. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total grade for the course.

A sample semester might include a first paper summarizing the current state of economic theory on social institutions, a second paper examining in greater detail the role of political, legal, cultural, and religious institutions on the development and maintenance of market exchange systems, a third paper on the economics of institutions using articles from economics journals as sources, and a capstone paper drawing from the topics covered in the three previous papers.

The number of assignments and the grading weight listed above serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course. Topics may vary according to the preferences and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 325: European Economic History

This course will have at least three writing assignments, based on the assigned readings and various research areas in European economic history. Two of these assignments will typically be reviews of the literature on a particular topic, of 4 to 6 typewritten pages. Students will also write a term paper of about 10 pages; they will be required to submit at least two drafts of their term papers. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 50% of the final course grade.

The grading of papers will be broken down into a grade for content — the quality of the student's economic and historical analysis and the student's thoroughness in dealing with the material at hand — and a grade for writing quality. Assessments of writing quality will be based on basic grammar and composition skills, structure, and

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organization. The two grades will receive equal weight.

Students will also take a final exam and possibly a midterm exam, both of which will include at least one essay question.

The total number of pages and final-grading weight serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics will vary with the instructor's areas of interest and expertise.

ECO 326: American Economic History Before 1900

This course will have 12 to 14 writing assignments, most of them based on the assigned readings and the student's chosen term paper topic. There will be eight to ten weekly prep papers, of 1 - 1½ pages each, intended to get the students thinking about the assigned readings for the week and to provide grist for class discussions. Students will get the opportunity to revise their prep papers until the writing is satisfactory. Term papers will be about ten pages in length, and students will be required to submit at least two drafts of their term papers. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 60% of the final course grade.

The grading of papers will be broken down into a grade for content — the quality of the student's economic and historical analysis and the student's thoroughness in dealing with the material at hand — and a grade for writing quality. Assessments of writing quality will be based on basic grammar and composition skills, structure, and organization. The two grades will receive equal weight.

Students will also take a final exam and possibly a midterm exam, both of which will include at least one essay question.

The total number of pages and final-grading weight serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics will vary with the instructor's areas of interest and expertise.

ECO 327: American Economic History Since 1900

This course will have 12 to 14 writing assignments, most of them based on the assigned readings and the student's chosen term paper topic. There will be eight to ten weekly prep papers, of 1 - 1½ pages each, intended to get the students thinking about the assigned readings for the week and to provide grist for class discussions. Students will get the opportunity to revise their prep papers until the writing is satisfactory. Term papers will be about ten pages in length, and students will be required to submit at least two drafts of their term papers. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 60% of the final course grade.

The grading of papers will be broken down into a grade for content — the quality of the student's economic and historical analysis and the student's thoroughness in dealing

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with the material at hand — and a grade for writing quality. Assessments of writing quality will be based on basic grammar and composition skills, structure, and organization. The two grades will receive equal weight.

Students will also take a final exam and possibly a midterm exam, both of which will include at least one essay question.

The total number of pages and final-grading weight serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics will vary with the instructor's areas of interest and expertise.

ECO 330: Development Economics

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on theoretical and empirical topics covered, policy issues, and development schools of thought. Assignments will be 4 to 7 typewritten pages in length and will include the opportunity for feedback and revision. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, organization and the quality of economic analysis. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total course grade.

Writing assignments will be chosen to address areas of scholarly debate and expose students to the diversity of opinion within the development community. Topics may vary with the interests and expertise of the instructor.

Eco 345: International Monetary and Financial Management

Students taking Economics 345, International Monetary and Financial Management, are required to write at least three short essays over the course of the semester. These essays will be on various contemporary topics related to international economic and financial issues. The first essay will be on a familiar topic and will be assigned early in the semester. Although the topics assigned for the first essay will have an economic theme, the primary purpose of this essay is to evaluate students' writing skills. Students will be given instructions on the general structure and organization of an economic essay while being encouraged to incorporate their own thoughts and ideas in their arguments. This first paper will be evaluated primarily with respect to the students' ability to effectively present an argument in writing, support it with factual information, and analyze and discuss the information to arrive at a logically sound conclusion. The instructor will provide each student with detailed remarks on his/her essays, pointing out the weaknesses as well as the strengths of each paper. Students will be given an opportunity to revise and resubmit their essays.

The second essay will be assigned some time during the fourth or fifth week of the semester, preferably, after the first examination. For this essay the students will be instructed to write on a topic related to the material covered in the course. The instructor may provide students with a list of relevant topics to choose from. In this essay students are expected to apply their (acquired) knowledge of economics to their analysis. Because the second essay is considered a preparatory exercise for the final

essay, students are required to first submit rough drafts of their papers to the instructor.

The instructor will review these drafts and return them to the students with comments and suggestions. Students will be encouraged to consult with the instructor further if needed. The second essay will have to be completed by the end of the eighth week of the semester. These essays will be evaluated based upon the clarity and the strength of their arguments as well as their economic contents. Students will be expected to demonstrate their ability to use economic tools of analysis in formulating an argument in favor or against a view or a policy.

The third and final essay will be assigned right after the completion of the second essay and will have to be completed and submitted one week before the beginning of the final-exam week. For this essay each student will choose his or her own topic but will be required to have it approved by the instructor. Like in the case of the second essay, each student will submit a rough draft to the instructor for suggestions and revisions and will be given the opportunity for subsequent consultations. The final essay will be evaluated based upon its organization as well as the clarity and strength of the economic analysis leading to a logically sound conclusion.

The total accumulated points on the three essays will account for at least twenty percent of the course grade.

ECO 356: Law and Economics

This course will have 5 to 8 writing assignments where the student will have to demonstrate how to use economics theory to analyze current legal problems. Assignments will be 2 to 4 typewritten pages. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure, and organization and the student's command of legal and economic analysis. All assignments will have revisions with the opportunity to redo the paper. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the course grade.

A sample assignment might examine how current problems in tort law can be evaluated using economic methodology or economic analysis is a useful tool in solving legal problems how solutions to legal problems can be found through economic analysis:

The number of assignments and grading weight listed above serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics may vary with the interests and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 378 : Health Economics

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on theoretical and empirical topics covered, policy issues, and other health related current issues. Assignments will be 3 to 6 typewritten pages. Grading will based on basic composition skills, structure and organization, and the student's command of economic analysis. All assignments will include the opportunity for feedback and revision. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total course grade.

A sample semester might include a first paper utilizing a mainstream media source to evaluate health related behavior, a second paper examining the industrial organization of health care markets using articles from health journals as source material, a third paper on health care reform issues, and a capstone paper drawing from the topics covered in the three previous papers.

The number of assignments and grading weight listed above serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics may vary with the interests and expertise of the instructor.

ECO 381: The Economics of Business Regulation

This course will have 3 to 5 writing assignments based on theoretical and empirical topics covered, policy issues, and other current issues in regulation and antitrust. Assignments will be 3 to 6 typewritten pages. Grading will be based on basic composition skills, structure and organization, and the student's command of economic analysis. All assignments will include the opportunity for feedback and revision. Writing assignments will constitute a minimum of 30% of the total course grade.

A sample semester might include a first paper summarizing current antitrust cases, a second paper applying theoretical models developed in class to a particular antitrust case, a third paper on a current issue in regulation or deregulation, and a capstone paper drawing from the topics covered in the three previous papers.

The number of assignments and grading weight listed above serve only as minimum parameters. Individual instructors may vary the writing component of this course within the confines of these parameters. Topics may vary on the interests and expertise of the instructor.

Eco 399: Independent Study in Economics

Students will be required to complete directed readings and research project under the supervision of an economics department faculty member. In most cases written work will constitute 100% of the course grade. While the nature of independent study projects may vary, most entail a major research paper. It is, however, feasible that some projects will entail a number of shorter written projects. Independent study projects will be subject to frequent review by the faculty supervisor, and students will have the opportunity to revise their work.

Eco 405: Seminar in Economic Theory and Policy

Students in this class are required to complete a research paper that either provides a discussion of their original research or provides a comprehensive and critical review of the relevant literature dealing with an economic policy issue. In either case, student papers must include a discussion of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature. The grades assigned on these papers are based upon the students' ability to effectively

summarize the relevant literature and to provide a clear, and logically sound, discussion of their own analysis. Logical organization, basic composition skills, and grammatical structure are evaluated in conjunction with the quality of the economic analysis. At least 1/3 of the course grade is based on the student's performance on this project. While there are no specific minimum or maximum page lengths or word counts, most completed papers are between 18 and 35 pages in length.

In completing these projects, students will have several opportunities for revisions. An initial project proposal is presented by the student early in the semester. This proposal is returned to the student with suggestions for modification or revision. All students are required to submit a rough draft of the literature review portion of the paper by the middle of the semester. A rough draft of the entire paper is also required later in the semester. Both drafts are evaluated and returned to the student with suggestions for revisions. Students are given the opportunity for subsequent drafts and revisions should this be necessary (provided that they complete the final draft by the scheduled due date).

This is the basic set of requirements used when this course was taught in the past. Different instructors may, in the future, require a different number of term papers, or may modify the nature of the writing assignment. Should such modifications occur, however, one or more writing assignments will provide the basis for at least one-third of the course grade and a process of providing students with feedback and an opportunity for revision will be maintained.

Eco 409: Applied Mathematical Economics Seminar

Students in this class are required to complete an econometrics research paper that provides a discussion of their original research and places this research in the context of prior theoretical and empirical work. The grades assigned on these papers are based upon the students' ability to effectively summarize the relevant literature and to provide a clear, and logically sound, discussion of their own analysis. Logical organization, basic composition skills, and grammatical structure will be evaluated in conjunction with the quality of the economic and econometric analysis. At least 1/3 of the course grade is based on the student's performance on this project. While there are no specific minimum or maximum page lengths or word counts, most completed papers are between 18 and 35 pages in length.

In completing these projects, students will have several opportunities for revisions. An initial project proposal is presented by the student early in the semester. This proposal is returned to the student with suggestions for modification or revision. All students are required to submit a rough draft of the literature review portion of the paper by the middle of the semester. A rough draft of the entire paper is also required later in the semester. Both drafts are evaluated and returned to the student with suggestions for revisions. Students are given the opportunity for subsequent drafts and revisions should this be necessary (provided that they complete the final draft by the scheduled due date).

This is the basic set of requirements used when this course was taught in the past. Different instructors may, in the future, require a different number of term papers, or

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may modify the nature of the writing assignment. Should such modifications occur, however, one or more writing assignments will provide the basis for at least one-third of the course grade and a process of providing students with feedback and an opportunity for revision will be maintained.

Eco 499: Independent Study for Honors in Economics

Students will be required to complete a directed readings and research project under the supervision of the economics department faculty. In most cases written work will constitute 100% of the course grade. Honors independent study will entail a major research paper. Honors independent study projects will be subject to frequent review by the faculty supervisor, and students will have the opportunity to revise their work. Students will be required to present their papers at either Quest or a department seminar.