

AMERICAN ECONOMIC POLICY

Faculty:

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Prerequisite: Economics 1010a or 1011a, API-101, or permission of one of the instructors.

We have completely overhauled the course to maximize learning in a remote environment. The course will have both asynchronous and live components:

Asynchronous components

Lectures. Topics that would traditionally be presented in lecture format will be available as videos for you to watch at your convenience.

Readings. Please see attached reading list. All readings are available on the course web site.

Interviews with economic policy makers. The professors will interview several leading economic policy makers and post the interviews as videos.

Live components

Interactive class discussions with professor. After watching the lecture material on video, you will join your classmates in highly interactive sessions where the professor will ask questions and spur discussion to delve deeper into the topics and build your skills at thinking through and explaining economic concepts clearly. For these sessions, we will be dividing the class in half. This will allow for greater interaction and enable us to accommodate students living in different time zones.

Cohort A: Tuesdays from 10:30am-11:45am.

Cohort B: Tuesdays from 12:00pm-1:15pm.

Policy discussions between Professor Liebman and Professor Summers. On alternate Thursdays, live class time will be devoted to a back and forth discussion between the two professors about the topics of the course and their application to current economic policy debates.

Policy discussions: Alternate Thursdays from 10:30am-11:45am.

Weekly review sections. For the first half of each weekly sessions you will be placed in a 3-student Zoom session to work on a series of problems/questions together. For the second half, you will meet in a group of approximately 12 students with a teaching fellow.

Review sessions: Will be offered at a variety of time slots TBD.

Participation in the interactive class discussions and weekly review sessions is mandatory.

However, you may miss up to two of each with no grade penalty and without seeking advance permission (if you are going to miss a review session, it would be polite to let your TF know in advance).

Time zone accommodations

We know some of you will be attending this class from places far from Cambridge.

For the interactive class discussions with a professor, we hope that the two time options will accommodate nearly everyone. Similarly, weekly review sessions with the teaching fellow will be scheduled at several different times.

While the joint policy discussions between the two professors will occur at the official class time, these sessions will be recorded and can be watched asynchronously if necessary.

Grades and Requirements

- a midterm exam given on Thursday October 22 -- 20 percent
- a preliminary and final draft of a four-page memo due at the beginning of class on October 15 and November 19-- 20 percent
- Participation in a policy simulation exercise – 10 percent
- 10 very brief written reactions to readings or other questions due at 9am on most Tuesdays – 10 percent
- Active participation in class sessions with professor and review sessions with TF – 10 percent.
- a final exam given in December -- 30 percent

Paper Option: Students have the option of writing a 20-25 page research paper (due on December 3) in lieu of the memo. The paper will count for 20 percent of the grade. Students who choose this option can count Economics 1420 as one of the courses that fulfill the economics department writing requirement.

Academic Integrity

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work.

Academic misconduct of any sort will not be tolerated, and everyone should understand that we take this issue quite seriously. Please do not cheat on exams. In two of the past three offerings of this course, a student has cheated on an exam and been required by the Administrative Board to withdraw from Harvard. If you are feeling unprepared or otherwise stressed out and tempted to cheat, please reach out to a member of the teaching team. We are here to help you succeed.

The course website can be accessed here: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/74789>

Schedule
American Economic Policy
Fall 2020

Introduction

Th Sep. 3 Challenges Facing the U.S. Economy (Liebman & Summers)

Unit 1: Responding to and Preventing Recessions and Financial Crises

Tu Sep. 8 Fiscal & monetary policy (Liebman)

Tu Sep. 15 Secular stagnation & the challenges of a low interest rate environment (Summers)

Th Sep. 17 Responding to economic crises (Liebman & Summers)

Unit 2: National savings, budget policy

Tu Sep. 22 Budget policy (Liebman)

Th Sep. 24 Budget and fiscal policy (Liebman & Summers)

Unit 3: Inequality, Tax Policy

Tu Sep. 29 Inequality and poverty (Liebman)

Tu Oct. 6 Tax policy (Liebman)

Th Oct. 8 Tax reform (Liebman & Summers)

Unit 4: Social Insurance

Tu Oct 13 UI, DI, & OASDI (Liebman)

Tu Oct 20 Health Insurance (Liebman)

Unit 5: U.S. economic policy in a global context (trade policy, the dollar)

Tu Oct 27 Trade policy (Summers)

Tu Nov 3 The U.S. and global economic coordination (Summers)

Th Nov 5 Discussion (Liebman and Summers)

Unit 6: Labor Markets

Tu Nov 10 Anti-poverty policies (Liebman)

Tu Nov 17 Immigration (Liebman)

Th Nov 19 Tech. change & the future of work (Liebman and Summers)

Unit 7: Regulatory Policy

Tu Nov 24 Climate Change (Liebman)

Tu Dec 1 Competition Policy (Summers)

Conclusion

Th Dec 3 The road ahead (Liebman and Summers)