

ECON 136: Working with Economic Data: Valuing the Environment Learning Goals

The purpose of this course is to provide enough of a background in economic reasoning and the application of quantitative skills to make sense of the way economists value environmental services, explain the negative consequences of human interaction with the environment, and, for some of us, contribute to the broader Eco-Literacy 360 conversation. In particular, the course will enhance your ability to

- Evaluate the relevance of alternative data for measuring human benefits from and impacts on the environment.
- Use summary statistics and algebraic calculation to manipulate data or use appropriate diagrams to support an economic analysis of environmental questions.
- Display relevant data in tabular or graphical form
- Integrate graphs, tables or diagrams with text to address a questions related to human interactions with the environment in such a way as to support or refute a thesis (ideally confirm or refute a working hypothesis).
- In reflecting on the discussion of an environmental or ecological question, discuss the underlying economic concepts that informed the analysis.
- Reflect on alternative ways of valuing the environment.⁹

Learning Strategies and Logistics

We will tackle our goals through in-class activities, a number of short assignments, two midterms, and a final memorandum produced as a self-scheduled exam. I will base your grade on my sense of your mastery of these elements as the course concludes rather than using some arbitrary weighted average of achievement on individual assignments.

We will often organize in-class activities to pair up students with complementary interests and skills. Therefore, you would be doing yourself and your classmates a disservice to miss class; I would appreciate your emailing me in advance should an absence be unavoidable. I expect and admire dedicated effort; but please understand that your final grade will reflect your mastery of the learning objectives, not the effort expended to achieve them. I welcome opportunities to discuss your progress with you during the semester, especially if your hard work is not yielding the results we all want.

Assessment

As a professor at Bryn Mawr, I wear two hats: I act as a coach to facilitate your learning and I am responsible for evaluating and certifying your mastery. The feedback I provide through most of the semester – **formative assessment** – serves that first purpose. You and I will be focusing on your strengths and weaknesses; striving to enhance the former and eliminate the latter.

Any essay, memo or presentation can be improved in a host of dimensions. For my assignments, I'll be asking you to focus primarily on a few elements. To facilitate my communicating your strengths and areas for growth, I will make frequent use of rubrics using the following scale.

- 5 - Exemplary
- 4 - High Quality
- 3 - Progressing Well
- 2 - Needs Improvement
- 0 - Inadequate

At the end of the semester, I'll have to come up with a single grade to reflect your mastery of all the learning goals in the course – **summative assessment**. I do not average grades; in fact, I don't give grades during the semester, because I found too many students fixating on the grade rather than on improving the level of mastery signaled by the grade.

If you are anxious about your progress, I am happy to discuss it with you at any time. Here's a rough concordance for how I'll translate my final assessments into entries in the Faculty's grade system.

Exemplary	4.0
High Quality	3.0-3.7
Adequate	2.0-3.0
Substantially Flawed	1.0-1.7
Inadequate	0.0

Don't lose heart if your early mastery of the learning objectives falls below the high quality level. This is supposed to be a learning experience. Virtually everyone's performance grows over the semester.

The ambitious diversity of learning goals set for this course complicates my task of coming up with a single grade. I'll use the following rough weighting scheme:

	360 Students	Non-360 Students
Mastery of analytical tools	35%	45%
Effective communication based on tools	25%	30%
Understanding of environmental challenges	10%	15%
Enhancing learning	10%	10%
Joint Component	20%	

Effort, while admirable (when effectively applied), is no guarantee of success. Exemplary mastery is a challenging goal; I have no formula for achieving it. However, it is my responsibility to ensure that if you do all I ask of you that you will achieve high quality mastery of our learning goals, i.e., a final grade of at least 3.0.

In particular, I will guarantee at least a 3.0 (and anticipate better performance) if you

- Meet all assignment deadlines
- Miss no more than one or two classes
- Demonstrate substantial effort on all drafts
- Provide thoughtful and substantive revisions following my and peer reviews of first drafts
- Evidence careful copyediting of final revisions
- Work with me on requested revisions to answers on the midterms

Make a good faith effort consistent with your comfort zone to comply with my guidelines and suggestions for engaging in class discussion, small group interaction, and engagement with others

Seek me out during office hours to address concerns as they arise

Respond to any other specific suggestions I make to enhance your learning