

AGEC 602
PREPARATION FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
M, W, F 8:30AM, Rawls 1071
Spring 2017

Otto Doering
Krannert 569 - I am there most days
Also, you can see me before or after class
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Objectives

When you finish this course you should have improved your ability to ask critical policy and other research questions, to identify and structure problems, and to assess appropriate research approaches. You should have improved your ability to write clearly, precisely, and concisely. You should be able to read your own work and that of others with improved critical attention to data, methods, validity, and effective communication. You should also have gained a sense of the breadth of economics and a background in some basic economics literature, some history, and some appreciation of the role of people and institutions.

Required Texts

The Art of Scientific Investigation by Beveridge (out of print - reproduced in 602 Readings)
The Double Helix by James D. Watson
Ag. Econ. 602 Readings, Available at Copymat, Chauncey Hill Mall
(There will also be handouts in class)

Course Requirements

1. Reading the assignment and attendance in class is essential. See me ahead of time if you must be absent. There will be sessions when you report on or critique a reading.
2. All 602 students shall attend the Snyder Lecture and at least one Department Seminar during the Spring Term! You will also attend a concert or other Convocations "live" performance during the term.

Grades

Your grade will depend on the papers, midterm, and class participation with the following weights:

| <u>Material</u> | <u>% of Grade</u> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Papers and Project Drafts | 40% |
| Final Project | 30% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Class Participation and Attendance | 10% |

You will need to visit with me OFTEN as you draft your project proposal!

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The Project

The first assignment, a one-page problem statement, will be due February 3rd. To prepare, you should pick an area of interest, if not a specific proposal. You should then go to a professor who has expertise in that area and ask him or her if they are willing to be your "evaluating professor." Presumably, you will already have some knowledge of, or interest in, the area before you talk with the professor. If you are uncertain, you may need to talk with several professors. **IT IS NOT THE PROFESSOR'S JOB TO DEFINE YOUR PROBLEM.** Your initial problem statement will be graded and returned to you with suggestions for improvement. You must put the name of your evaluating professor on the top right corner of the February 3rd assignment.

When you get your February 3rd assignment back with my comments, you need to visit with your evaluating professor, and probably me, by February 13th, and discuss how your problem statement can be improved. Your second assignment for the project due February 17th is a reformulation of your initial problem statement, plus a statement of the objective of your research. After I return this to you, it would be wise to have this reviewed by your evaluating professor, whose comments will ultimately affect your grade.

Your third assignment for the project is due on March 6th, revised problem and objectives plus an hypothesis statement. Again, visits with me are likely to be helpful.

Your fourth assignment is due April 5th – it will be a description of the procedure and data requirements (methodology) needed to test your hypothesis. You will also make a knowledge map. You will hand in the revised problem/hypothesis statements as well.

Your final project statement is due April 24th will be a four to six page compilation of 1) the problem statement and your objective, 2) the hypothesis (or hypotheses) you propose to test, 3) the procedures and methodology, and your knowledge map and references/bibliography. You now have a complete and concise project document. This will be reviewed by your evaluating professor, whose comments will help determine your grade on the project. I will need 2 HARD COPIES of your final assignment. I will give one to your evaluating professor and I will keep one to review.

Remember, you will be doing readings and other writing assignments as well, so keep on schedule with your work on the project.

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SPRING2017**

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>TOPIC</u> | <u>READING</u> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <u>How to Think Like a Scientist (economist?)</u> | | |
| 1/9 | Intro. Project and Beveridge | Art of Scientific Investigation |
| 1/11 | Beveridge | (From your "Readings" book) |
| 1/13 | Beveridge | |
| 1/16 | <i>Martin Luther King Day</i> | |
| 1/18 | Beveridge | |
| 1/20 | Double Helix | <i>Jazz Concert</i> |
| 1/23 | Double Helix | (Get Double Helix copy) |
| 1/25 | Double Helix | and "Truth and Consequences" |
| 1/27 | Paradigms | Friedman, Positive Economics |
| 1/30 | Utilizing Knowledge Resources – <i>CLASS IN HICKS G959 Computer Lab</i> – Prof. Howard | |
| | Choose Evaluating Professor | |
| 2/1 | Paradigms | Robbins |
| 2/3 | Paradigms | Stigler and Becker |
| | Initial Problem Statement Due | |
| 2/6 | The Problem Type Rules | Batie, Wicked Problems |
| 2/8 | Paradigms | Mathematical Expression in Economics |
| <u>Asking Good Questions</u> | | |
| 2/10 | Does Data Matter? | Professor Abbott Lecture |
| 2/13 | Objectives – Problem Recognition | Waugh, Does the Consumer Benefit. . |
| | Have visited with Evaluating Professor to improve problem statement. | |
| 2/15 | Literature Review | the Economics of Schooling |
| 2/17 | Problem Recognition | Hueckel, Historical Approach |
| | Revised Problem and New Objective Statement Due | |
| 2/20 | Problem Recognition | Hand Out Reading |
| 2/22 | Problem Recognition | Doering, Full Costs of Farm Exports |
| <u>Designing Experiments</u> | | |
| 2/24 | Hypothesis | Schmitz & Seckler, Tomato Harvester |
| 2/27 | Hypothesis | Scientific Method (Visitor) |

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>TOPIC</u> | <u>READING</u> |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 3/1 | Hypothesis | Friedman, the Great Contraction |
| 3/3 | Hypothesis | Pauly, Moral Hazard & Arrow response |
| 3/6 | Hypothesis & Causality | the Wizard & Sunspots |
| | Revised Problem, Revised Objective and New Hypothesis Statement Due | |
| 3/8 | Validity | Validity reading |
| 3/10 | Validity and Causality | Validity Cont. & Experimental Design |
| | <i>Spring Break</i> | |
| 3/20 | Experimental Design | Experimental Design Handout |
| 3/22 | Experimental Design | Does the Surgeon General Need |
| 3/24 | Experimental Design, Validity & Causality | |
| 3/27 | <i>EXAM</i> | |
| 3/29 | Aggregation Problem | Selection of Benchmark Farms |
| 3/31 | Building an Economic Model | Varian |

Surveys – Designing and Dealing with Them

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|-----|--|-----------------------|
| 4/3 | Sample Research Project Presentation | |
| 4/5 | Surveys | |
| | Revised Hypothesis, Knowledge Map & Methodology (Procedure/Data) Due | |
| 4/7 | Surveys | Visiting Practitioner |
| | <i>4/7 Snyder Lecture!</i> | |
| | (From Now On You Are Revising the Whole Project Proposal) | |

Practicum Readings and Student Critiques

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|------|---|--|
| 4/10 | Does History Matter? | Doering, Looking Back. . |
| 4/12 | Institutions Count | Hicks, Money Law and Credit |
| 4/14 | Critique (what to look for) | Handout |
| 4/17 | Farm Policy – What is needed & Why Have It? | Tolley, Ag Policy & Doering, Rationale |
| 4/19 | Smith's Actual Ideas, Trade & Government | Wealth of Nations |
| 4/21 | The Key to Economic Behavior Is? | Economics of Fatal Mistakes |
| 4/24 | Hot Topic or Institutional Reading | Shabman (?) |
| | <i>COMPLETE FINAL PROJECT DUE</i> | |
| 4/26 | What Are Public Goods? Do They Matter? | Political Economy of Public Goods |
| 4/28 | Is All This Worth It? | Can Ag Economists Contribute? |