

AGEC 602  
PREPARATION FOR POLICY ANALYSIS  
M, W, F 8:30AM, Rawls 1071  
Spring 2018

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. I am supplying discounted tickets for at least one event.

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 2nd. 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 2nd assignment.

When you get your February 2nd assignment back with my comments, you need to visit with your evaluating professor, and probably me, by February 12th, and discuss how your problem statement can be improved. Your second assignment for the project due February 16th 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 5th, revised problem and objectives plus an hypothesis statement. Again, visits with me are likely to be helpful.

Your fourth assignment is due April 4th – 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 23rd 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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SPRING2018**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u>
<b><u>How to Think Like a Scientist (economist?)</u></b>		
1/8	Intro. Project and Beveridge	Art of Scientific Investigation
1/10	Beveridge	(From your "Readings" book)
1/12	Beveridge	
1/15	<i>Martin Luther King Day</i>	
1/17	Beveridge	
1/19	Double Helix	<i>Jazz Concert</i>
1/22	Double Helix	
1/24	Double Helix	and "Truth and Consequences"
1/26	Utilizing Knowledge Resources – <i>Class in HICKS G959 Computer Lab</i> – Prof. Howard	
1/29	Paradigms	Friedman, Positive Economics
	Choose Evaluating Professor	
1/31	Paradigms	Robbins
2/2	Paradigms	Stigler and Becker
	Initial Problem Statement Due	
2/5	The Problem Type Rules	Batie, Wicked Problems
2/7	Paradigms	Mathematical Expression in Economics
<b><u>Asking Good Questions</u></b>		
2/9	Does Data Matter?	Visiting Professor/example
2/12	Objectives – Problem Recognition	Waugh, Does the Consumer Benefit. .
	Have visited with Evaluating Professor to improve problem statement.	
2/14	Literature Review	the Economics of Schooling
2/16	Problem Recognition	Hueckel, Historical Approach . . . .
	Revised Problem and New Objective Statement Due	
2/19	Problem Recognition	Hand Out Reading
2/21	Problem Recognition	Doering, Full Costs of Farm Exports
<b><u>Designing Experiments</u></b>		
2/23	Hypothesis	Schmitz & Seckler, Tomato Harvester

2/26 Hypothesis

Scientific Method (Visitor)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u>
2/28	Hypothesis	Friedman, the Great Contraction
3/2	Hypothesis	Pauly, Moral Hazard & Arrow response
3/5	Hypothesis & Causality	the Wizard & Sunspots
	Revised Problem, Revised Objective and New Hypothesis Statement Due	
3/7	Validity	Validity reading
3/9	Validity and Causality	Validity Cont. & Experimental Design
	<i>Spring Break</i>	
3/19	Experimental Design	Experimental Design Handout
3/21	Experimental Design	Does the Surgeon General Need . . . .
3/23	Experimental Design, Validity & Causality	
3/26	<i>EXAM</i>	
3/28	Aggregation Problem or other topic	(Selection of Benchmark Farms?)
3/30	Building an Economic Model	Varian (supplemented?)

Surveys – Designing and Dealing with Them

4/2	Sample Research Project Presentation	
4/4	Surveys	
	Revised Hypothesis, Knowledge Map & Methodology (Procedure/Data) Due	
4/6	Surveys	Visiting Practitioner's Example (From Now On You Are Revising the Whole Project Proposal)

Practicum Readings and Student Critiques

4/9	Does History Matter?	Doering, Looking Back. .
4/11	Institutions Count	Hicks, Money Law and Credit
4/13	Critique (what to look for)	Handout
	<i>Attending Snyder Lecture</i>	
4/16	Farm Policy – What is needed & Why Have It?	Tolley, Ag Policy & Doering, Rationale
4/18	Smith's Actual Ideas, Trade & Government	Wealth of Nations
4/20	The Key to Economic Behavior Is?	Economics of Fatal Mistakes
4/23	Hot Topic or Institutional Reading	Shabman (?)
	<i>COMPLETE FINAL PROJECT DUE</i>	
4/25	What Are Public Goods? Do They Matter?	Political Economy of Public Goods
4/27	Is All This Worth It?	Can Ag Economists Contribute?