Professor: Michelle Holder, Ph.D.

Class Days and Location: Tuesdays & Thursdays, North Hall 1306
Email: mholder@jjay.cuny.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:50pm – 3:45pm
Office Location: 3500N (North Hall)

Course Objectives:
The objectives of this course are to: (1) understand how and where the most well-known U.S. economic statistics are generated; (2) learn to measure and interpret economic phenomena. Students will learn how to estimate things such as inflation and labor force indicators as well as evaluate the limitations of some commonly used measures. Students will get hands-on training with economic statistics and learn to generate simple and clear charts and graphs. Particular emphasis will be placed on statistics useful for macroeconomic analysis.

Course Goals:
At the end of this course students should be able to:

- Identify sources for major U.S. economic data such as the unemployment rate, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and the poverty rate;
- Be able to estimate and/or interpret what these data tell us about the status of the U.S. economy and explain it to others, and;
- Be able to produce simple and clear graphs and charts in Microsoft Excel which depict most commonly referenced U.S. economic data.

Course Requirements:
- Take-Home Assignments-20%

Take-home assignments will be posted every other week. Students will work in groups of four on assignments and will submit ONE group answer. At the end of the semester each student will evaluate other members of their group, and these evaluations will factor into grading. Assignments will receive either a “√+” which is A (or 98), “√” which is B (or 85), “√-“ which is a C (or 75), “-“ which is a D (or 65), and an F or O (zero). Assignments handed in after start of class will be downgraded one level. Assignments handed in after class has ended will be downgraded two levels. Assignments submitted a day late will not be accepted. Assignments cannot be resubmitted once they are graded. There will be approximately six (6) take-home assignments during the semester, and only the best 5 will be included in the grading for this portion of the overall course grade.
• **In-Class Presentation- 15%**

*On the day take-home assignments are due they will be presented at the start of class by the applicable group; each member of the group must present an answer to one question on the assignment. Students must be prepared to explain the economic data they are presenting as well as represent it graphically. All data that will be used in this course will be publicly available on the Internet. Topics being presented will be randomly assigned to groups.*

• **In-Class Midterm-25%**

• **Take-Home Final Exam (With In-Class Portion for Graphing)- 20%**

• **Class Participation- 10%**

• **Class Attendance- 10%**

*A maximum grade of 100 is attainable for this portion of the grade only if there are no absences or latenesses. Each absence results in a deduction of 10 points from this grade, and each lateness results in a 3.33 points deduction. As an example, if a student is absent two times and late three times their attendance grade will be a 70.*

**Textbook and Reading Materials:**
The main text for the course will be *Field Guide to the U.S. Economy (Revised and Updated)*, by Jonathan Teller-Elsberg, Nancy Folbre, James Heintz, and the Center for Popular Economics, New York: The New Press, 2006. Other readings for the course will be available either through John Jay College’s library, on Blackboard, via the web, or provided by the instructor.

**Grading:**
The grading scale is as follows (rounded to the nearest whole number):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Less than 60 %</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Academic Integrity**
For John Jay College’s policy on academic integrity, including plagiarism, please go to: [http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/web_images/Policyand_Procedures.pdf](http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/web_images/Policyand_Procedures.pdf).

**Writing Quality as Part of Grading and the John Jay College Writing Center**
This course will require significant written analysis, the quality of which will be a consideration in grading, so if you need help writing you should consider utilizing the resources available in the John Jay College Writing Center. They provide free tutoring to students, helping them become more effective writers, from organizing and structuring a paper, to writing and proofreading it. Being able to write well is a useful skill in many situations, a skill definitely worth honing.
Disability Policy
Students with disabilities will be provided reasonable accommodations if they are determined eligible by the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). Prior to granting disability accommodations in this course, the instructor must receive written verification of a student’s eligibility from the OAS (phone # 212-237-8031). It is the student’s responsibility to initiate contact with that office and to follow the established procedures for having the accommodation notice sent to the instructor.

Friendly Expectations and Understandings
1) Students are expected to attend class on time. If you are late, please quietly and inconspicuously find a computer workstation, doing your best not to disturb your fellow students and disrupt the professor’s lecture.
2) At the start of class students should log-out of their computer workstations. The workstations are to be used only for in-class exercises and not for note-taking. If you prefer to take notes electronically, please bring and use the tablet or laptop that you use to take notes in your other classes.
3) Students are expected to turn down their ringers and turn off the vibrating functions on their cellphones and put them away in their backpacks or purses, off of their desks. If you use your cellphone to keep time this should not be a concern because class will always end on time. Texting in class is prohibited.
4) Unless you receive prior approval from me, if you miss an exam or in-class presentation you will receive a grade of 0 (zero) for that exam or presentation.

Schedule of Classes, Topics to be Covered, and Take-Home Assignments
NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus during the semester due to changes in curriculum and timing or class scheduling.

Week 1 (Aug. 27th)
Introduction
Readings: Teller-(1) Elsberg et.al. Toolkit pages 183, 184, and 188-190

Week 2 (Sept. 1st & 3rd)
Surveys, Sample Data and Population Data
Excel
Readings: (1) Fritz Scheuren “What is a Survey” web pamphlet available at: http://www.whatisasurvey.info/overview.htm . Only read Chapter 1
**Week 3 (Tues. Sept. 8th - no class Thurs. Sept. 10th)**
Labor Market I – Unemployment
Reading: Teller-Elsberg et. al. Chapter 2, pages 31 & 32
*1st Take Home Assignment Posted Fri. Sept. 11th*

**Week 4 (Thurs. Sept. 17th, no class Tues. Sept. 15th)**
Labor Market II - Industrial Distribution of U.S. Workers
Reading: To be determined (TBD)
*In-Class Presentation of Take-Home Assignment #1 Thurs. Sept. 17th*

**Week 5 (Thurs. Sept. 24th, no class Tues. Sept. 22nd)**
Demographic Data- Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Age
Reading: Teller-Elsberg ET. Al. Chapters 3 and 4 and Toolkit page 194
*2nd Take-Home Assignment Posted Fri. Sept. 25th*

**Week 6 (Sept. 29th & Oct. 1st)**
Prices and Inflation
Readings: (1) Teller- Elsberg et. al. page 153 and Toolkit page 191 (price portion only)
*In-Class Presentation of Take-Home Assignment #2 Thurs. Oct. 1st*

**Week 7 (Oct. 6th & 8th)**
Wages
Reading: Teller-Elsberg et. al. Chapter 2, pages 19-26 and Toolkit page 191 (means, medians, etc. portion only)
*3rd Take-Home Assignment Posted Fri. Oct. 9th*

**Week 8 (Oct. 13th & 15th)**
Income
Reading: Teller-Elsberg et. al. Chapter 3, pages 91-94, and Toolkit page 193
*In-Class Presentation of Take-Home Assignment #3 Thurs. Oct. 15th*

**Week 9 (Oct. 20th & 22nd)**
Midterm Exam Week
Review Session for Midterm Exam—Oct. 20th
In-Class Midterm Exam Given—Oct. 22nd
*4th Take-Home Assignment Posted Fri. Oct. 23rd*

**Week 10 (Oct. 27th & 29th)**
Gross Domestic Product and Macroeconomic Cycles
*In-Class Presentation of Take-Home Assignment #4 Thurs. Oct. 29th*
Week 11 (Nov. 3rd & 5th)
Interest Rates
Reading: Teller-Elsberg et. al. Chapter 9 pages 154-156
*5th Take-Home Assignment Posted Fri. Nov. 6th

Week 12 (Nov. 10th & 12th)
Poverty & Inequality I
Readings: (1) Teller-Elsberg et. al. Chapter 1, pages 1-10 and Chapter 6, pages 95-108
(2) US Census Bureau “How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty” (Official Measure), available at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html
*In-Class Presentation of Take-Home Assignment #5 Thurs. Nov. 12th

Week 13 (Nov. 17th & 19th)
Poverty & Inequality II
Readings: Same as for prior week
*6th Take-Home Assignment Posted Fri. Nov. 27th

Week 14 (Dec 1st & 3rd- no class Tues. Nov. 24th or Thanksgiving)
Incarceration
Readings: (1) “Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001”
(2) “Prisoners in 2013,” both readings available at the Bureau of Justice Statistics website, www.bjs.gov
*In-Class Presentation of Take-Home Assignment #6 Thurs. Dec. 3rd

Week 15 (Dec 8th & 10th)
Preparations for Final Exam
Review Session Dec 8th
In-Class portion of Final Exam (graphing) & distribution of Take Home Portion – Dec 10th
Hand-In Take-Home portion of Exam during Final Exam Week- date TBD