Economic Analysis of Crime
ECO/PSC 315.99 Asynchronous Online Syllabus
Professor Jay Hamilton
Fall 2021
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
524 West 59th Street, New York
City University of New York

Email: jhamilton@jjay.cuny.edu

Feedback and Response Time
I will do my best to answer emails within 24 hours. Graded assignments may take up to a week for grading and comments. You have a right to helpful feedback on written assignments. If you feel that you have not received sufficient feedback, then email me and ask for more. If you can, be specific in your request for more feedback. The purpose to feedback is to help you improve your work.

Economics Department: 646-557-4835    https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/department-economics

Course Description
Crimes with economic motivations are analyzed using the Economic Theory of Crime. Topics focus on urban problems including: narcotics, illegal gambling, loan-sharking, labor racketeering, and organized crime. Costs of crime and imprisonment are discussed. Strengths and weaknesses of the Economic Theory of Crime are discussed from alternative points of view.

Learning Goals:
Upon passing this class students will be able to:
• Demonstrate an understanding of different economic approaches to crime and Criminal Justice
• Communicate knowledge of economic analysis of crime in written essays
• Work with other students to produce persuasive documents

Professor’s Note on the Course Description and Learning Goals
I wrote this description and the Learning Goals over fifteen years ago and it needs to be changed. We will actually look at several different “Economic Theories of Crime.” We won’t have time to cover all those topics, but the spirit of the course is the same. My goals for this class include:
• Have fun with a specialized field within economics.
• Help students make connections between the capitalist economic systems and crime
• Help students understand why mainstream economics is successful at getting policies adopted, even when the policies do not work or make things worse.
• Critically evaluate a few different schools of thought within Economics.

Course Summary
Most work takes place on Blackboard. We have weekly readings & media, discussions, and exercises – the discussions are the most important part of the class. There are two essays and a group project. Late work is accepted, but with a penalty. There is one book you are required to obtain on your own: The Honest Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone--Especially Ourselves (2012) by Dr. Dan Ariely. All other readings and media are provided in Blackboard.
How to Succeed in this Class
The most important factor in your grade will be the time you put into this course. You should spend 6-8 hours a week on this course. That means a total of 90 to 120 hours over the 15 weeks of the semester. Some students may need to spend more time on the course, and some may achieve their goals with less. The second factor is consistency and routine. You will do best if you pace yourself. It is too easy to let online courses slide and then try to catch up – that does not work. Your best strategy is to budget your 8 hours a week during times you know you can give the course your attention – stick it in your schedule and treat those hours as inviolate. Do not try to squeeze this class into the holes of your life. Third, ask questions! There is a special Discussion Thread in the “Introduction” Discussion Forum to ask questions. Fourth, get all of the “easy” points that are not graded but are due by the end of each week (exercises and discussions). Fifth, proofread and “polish” written essay assignments that are graded. You will be writing in discussion boards where only your participation is graded; in these places you can be less formal with your writing.

Format of the Course and Workload
The course is divided into 5 units. Each unit is divided into weeks, some units contain more weeks than others. Most weeks end on Sundays. There are readings or alternative media assignments for each week. These “inputs” should be started early in the week or even before the week begins. Each week also has assignments that earn points toward your final grade. Unless otherwise stated, these assignments are due at THE END OF THE WEEK. You are encouraged work on them early and to submit them early. Assignments include:

1) “Reading Exercises” – fourteen weekly exercises, each worth 1% of course grade (14% total). These exercises contain multiple choice, ranking, multiple answer, and true/false questions. These exercises should help you make the most of the readings and other media. You will be able to retake these until you earn full credit. You are encouraged to try the exercises BEFORE you begin the readings; this will help you identify the important parts of the readings.

2) Discussion Forums – fourteen weekly discussion assignments, each worth 1% of the course grade (14% total). Most students will earn full credit. Less than full credit will be awarded to late posts or insufficient effort. Think of the Discussion Forums as a place to engage the class material, make mistakes and learn from them.

3) Group Creative Projects – Students will be placed into groups. Each group will produce a creative project related to the class. At the end of Unit 1 Week 2 (September 12) each group submits a report describing their efforts so far. Each group needs to schedule a time to Zoom meeting with the professor before the end of Unit 2 (October 10). The final “product” is due on December 5th. The projects will be shared with the class in the final week of the course.

4) Essays – You should work on these for several weeks before they are due. You are not required to submit outlines or drafts, but you can ask the Professor for advice and to review of outlines and drafts. More detailed instructions will be provided.

Course Grade
Reading Exercises 14%
Discussions 14%
Group Creative Project 20%
Essays 50%
Course Feedback 2%
Grading Scale
The grading scale will be the following* (grades rounded to the nearest whole number):

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

* I reserve the right to assign a higher letter grade than points earned (but not vice versa).

Textbooks
ARIELY: The Honest Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone--Especially Ourselves (2012)
by Dr. Dan Ariely
Harper Perennial

Additional readings, videos, and podcasts available through Blackboard. These may be updated throughout the semester.

Please use the “Reading Guides” and Reading Exercises to help you manage the reading load. You do not need to read every sentence and listen to every minute of video/audio. Skimming through readings is a valuable skill – so work on it during this class. I find that its best to preview a reading. I give it only 10 minutes and I read the introduction and conclusion, plus the section titles and glance at any figures and graphs. Then I can go back for a deeper read of what is important. Taking notes as you go also helps.

POLICIES

Academic Integrity (from the 2020-2021 Undergraduate Bulletin)
The following information is excerpted from the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity. The complete text of the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity can be accessed at
http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Academic_Integrity_Policy.pdf.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York. Penalties for academic dishonesty include academic sanctions, such as failing or otherwise reduced grades, and/or disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.

Definitions and Examples of Academic Dishonesty
Cheating is the unauthorized use or attempted use of material, information, notes, study aids, devices or communication during an academic exercise. The following are some examples of cheating, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:

- Copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work
- Unauthorized collaboration on a take-home assignment or examination
- Using notes during a closed-book examination
- Taking an examination for another student, or asking or allowing another student to take an examination for you
- Changing a graded exam and returning it for more credit
- Submitting substantial portions of the same paper to more than one course without consulting with each instructor
- Preparing answers or writing notes in a blue book (exam booklet) before an examination
• Allowing others to research and write assigned papers or do assigned projects, including use of commercial term paper services
• Giving assistance to acts of academic misconduct/dishonesty
• Fabricating data (all or in part)
• Submitting someone else’s work as your own
• Unauthorized use during an examination of any electronic devices such as cell phones, palm pilots, smart phones, tablet devices, computers or other technologies to retrieve or send information.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person’s ideas, research or writings as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:
• Copying another person’s actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes attributing the words to their source
• Presenting another person’s ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source
• Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the sources
• Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments
• Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the Internet without citing the source, and “cutting and pasting” from various sources without proper attribution.

Obtaining unfair advantage is any activity that intentionally or unintentionally gives a student an unfair advantage in the student’s academic work over another student. The following are some examples of obtaining an unfair advantage, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:
• Stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining advance access to examination materials
• Depriving other students of access to library materials by stealing, destroying, defacing, or concealing them
• Retaining, using or circulating examination materials, which clearly indicate that they should be returned at the end of the exam
• Intentionally obstructing or interfering with another student’s work

Falsification of records and official documents. The following are some examples of falsification, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:
• Forging signatures of authorization
• Falsifying information on an official academic record
• Falsifying information on an official document such as a grade report, letter of permission, drop/add form, I.D. card or other college document

Attendance (from the 2020-2021 Undergraduate Bulletin)
Students are expected to attend all class meetings as scheduled. Excessive absence may result in a failing grade for the course and may result in the loss of financial aid. The number of absences that constitute excessive absence is determined by the individual instructor, who announces attendance guidelines at the beginning of the semester in the course syllabus. Students who register during the Change of Program period after classes have begun are responsible for the individual course attendance policy, effective from the first day of the semester.
Online Attendance for this Course

Attendance is determined by completion of weekly tasks – Reading Exercises and Discussion forums. Students not “attending” will directly receive reduced grades through these missed grading opportunities. Students facing reasonable difficulties participating every week should contact the instructor for guidance. The instructor is willing to work with every student and every circumstance to achieve the best results for the student.

Extra Work During the Semester (from the 2020-2021 Undergraduate Bulletin)

Instructors are not obligated to offer extra-credit work in any course. Any extra-credit coursework opportunities offered during the semester for a student to improve his or her grade must be made available to all students at the same time. The term "extra credit work" refers to optional work that may be assigned by the instructor to all students in addition to the required work for the course that all students must complete. It is distinguished from substitute assignments or substitute work that may be assigned by the instructor to individual students, such as make-up assignments to accommodate emergencies or to accommodate the special circumstances of individual students.

Late Work and “Extra Credit” for this Course

Late work may be accepted for reduced credit at the instructor’s discretion. No extra credit will be offered. Students facing reasonable difficulties completing assignments should contact the instructor for guidance on “substitute assignments.” The instructor is willing to work with every student and every circumstance to achieve the best results for the student.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (copied from the 2020-2021 Undergraduate Bulletin)

A student should make an initial request for accommodation to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, and provide appropriate supporting documentation. The Student Disabilities Services Coordinator may consult with appropriate college officials such as the instructor or Provost to determine the appropriateness of the requested accommodation consistent with the program requirements. Such consultation shall be confidential, and limited to those officials whose input is necessary to the decision. Students may consult with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities or the 504/ADA Compliance Coordinator at any time to discuss and understand their rights under the Rehabilitation Act, the ADA, and state and local legislation, and they are encouraged to do so.

Carrie Dehls is the Human Resources Benefits Coordinator. Employees may reach her at cdehls@jjay.cuny.edu or at 212.237.8504.

Malaine Clarke is the Director of Accessibility Services. Students may reach her at maclarke@jjay.cuny.edu or at 212.237.8185.

Silvia Montalban is the College’s 504/ADA Compliance Coordinator, She can be reached at smontalban@jjay.cuny.edu or at 646.557.4409.

Additional information about this CUNY policy can be accessed at:
http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/accessibility-services-appeal-process

Class Environment

This course discusses material some people consider sensitive. My goal is to provide a class where every student feels safe; but students should also feel “a little uncomfortable.” You should feel safe in that other students do not verbally attack you personally or make aspersions toward certain groups of people.. You should feel safe in expressing your opinions. You should feel safe enough to make
mistakes and expect forgiveness from others when you do. (I cannot over emphasize the importance of feeling safe enough to make mistakes – college is all about a safe place to make mistakes – or at least it should be).

You should also feel somewhat uncomfortable about the subject matter and the policy positions of others including politicians, your classmates, your professors and even yourself. We need to confront the things in our lives and society that make us uncomfortable so that we can produce positive change. If you find the class has progressed beyond uncomfortable and transgressed into “unsafe.” Please let me know immediately.

I do not provide “trigger” warnings for each item that may make someone feel unsafe. If you know that you are very sensitive to certain subjects, please discuss this with me at the beginning of the semester. I will work with you individually to navigate these subjects.
Topics and Readings Schedule
Note: Most, but not all weeks run Monday to Sunday.
Any additions or changes will be announced.

Unit 1: Economic Analysis in Context

Introduction to our Class: Economic Analysis of Crime
Week 1 Ends September 2
Readings:
* Course Syllabus
Assignments:
* Week 1 Reading Exercise
* Week 1 Discussion

Introduction to Three Kinds of Economic Analysis
Week 2: Ends September 12
Readings:
* ARIELY Introduction: Why is Dishonesty so Interesting
* “Marxist Ideology, Communist Reality and the Concept of Criminal Justice” by Eugene Kamenka and Alice Erh-Soon Tay in Criminal Justice Ethics 6(3) 1987, 3-29.
Assignments:
* Week 2 Readings Exercise
* Week 2 Discussion
* Group report on progress so far

Context: THE Economy, Racial Justice, & The Study of Economics
Week 3 Ends September 19
Readings:
* “The U.S. economy is bigger than it was pre-pandemic, but Covid could still decide what happens next” on CNBC.com by Patti Domm on July 29, 2021.
* Statement from the AEA Executive Committee (On Blacks in Economics), Member Announcement, June 5, 2020.
  https://www.neaecon.org/nea-anti-racism-statement/
https://www.epi.org/blog/open-letter-to-economic-institutions-black-lives-matter/

“For too long, economists have dodged the issue of racism and discrimination” by Kai Ryssdal and Maria Hollenhorst (June 18, 2020) on Market Place.


“Ensuring an Economy That Works for Black Women” video from The Center for American Progress (August 7, 2020).
https://www.americanprogress.org/events/2020/07/29/488357/ensuring-economy-works-black-women/

Assignments:
* Week 3 Readings Exercise
* Week 3 Discussion

Unit 2: Mainstream Approach: Rational Acts

The Seminal Paper
Week 4: Ends September 26
Readings:
* Optional Video: The Economics of Crime and the Law (A tribute to Gary Becker)
Assignments:
* Week 4 Readings Exercise
* Week 4 Discussion

Mainstream Empirical
Week 5 Ends October 3
Readings:
Assignments:
* Week 5 Readings Exercise
* Week 5 Discussion

Update on Mainstream Empirical
Week 6 Ends October 10
Readings:
https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/what-caused-crime-decline
Assignments:
* Week 6 Readings Exercise
* Week 6 Discussion
* Group meetings with the instructor

**Unit 3: Behavioral Economics**

**Behavioral Experiments**  
*Week 7 Ends October 17*

**Readings:**  
* Ariely: Chapters 1 through 5

**Assignments:**  
* Week 7 Readings Exercise
* Week 7 Discussion

**Social Aspects of Behavioral**  
*Week 8 Ends October 24*

**Readings:**  
* Ariely: Chapters 6 through 10

**Assignments:**  
* Week 8 Readings Exercise
* Week 8 Discussion

**Behavioral and Violence**  
*Week 9 Ends October 31*

**Readings:**  

**Assignments:**  
* Week 9 Readings Exercise
* Week 9 Discussion
* Essay #1

**Unit 4: Radical Heterodox Approaches**

**Critiques of Criminal Justice**  
*Week 10 Ends November 7*

**Readings:**  
* “The Marxian Critique of Criminal Justice” by Jeffrey Reiman in *Criminal Justice Ethics* 6(3) 1987, 30-49.

**Videos:**  
* “The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison” By One Trip Little on Cheap Bibles, Published on Jan 28, 2016.
* “The Ballad of Tom Joad” by Woody Guthrie
* “The Ghost of Tom Joad” by Bruce Springsteen

Assignments:
* Week 10 Readings Exercise
* Week 10 Discussion

Heterodox Approaches to the Police
Week 11 Ends November 14
Readings:

Assignments:
* Week 11 Readings Exercise
* Week 11 Discussion

Crime and Minorities
Week 12 Ends November 21
Readings:

Assignments:
* Week 12 Readings Exercise
* Week 12 Discussion

Unit 5 Reform
Reforming the Criminal Justice System
Week 13 Ends December 5
Readings:
* “Criminal Justice Reform” on the *Equal Justice Initiative* website https://eji.org/criminal-justice-reform/
* “Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department” by United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, March 4, 2015
Assignments:
* Week 13 Reading Exercise
* Week 13 Discussion
* Group Projects

Reforming Society: Race, Justice & the Future

Week 14 Ends December 13

Readings:
* 5 Things to Know About Communities of Color and Environmental Justice by Jasmine Bell April 25, 2016, on Center for American Progress website
* Environmental & Climate Justice on NAACP website
https://naacp.org/know-issues/environmental-climate-justice
* “America's Coming Conservative Climate Offensive” by Drew Bond and John Hart, May 07, 2020, in on RealClearEnergy.org
https://www.realclearenergy.org/articles/2020/05/07/americas_coming_conservative_climate_offensive_491036.html

Assignments:
* Week 14 Reading Exercise
* Week 14 Discussion:
* Essay #2