

ECON 241: Canadian Economic Prospects and Challenges

St Francis Xavier University

Department of Economics

Professor: Brandon Malloy

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Classes: Monday 3:45-5:00, Wednesday 3:45-5:00 in Nicholson Hall 345

Office Hours: Monday 1:30-3:30, Wednesday 1:30-3:30, Friday 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

Course Description:

Covers policy issues and problems in the Canadian economy. Topics include: employment and unemployment; poverty and income distribution; productivity, higher education and the 'brain drain'; health care and the social welfare safety net; trade and globalization; the economics of sport; the environment and sustainable development; the primary sectors, regional disparity; and the new economy. Topics that reflect strong student interest and/or new issues may be added.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

- (1) To introduce students to the breadth and scope of issues impacting the Canadian economy and the policy challenges they present
- (2) To examine the effects of possible policy prescriptions on the Canadian economy and public and private life
- (3) To introduce the tools of economic analysis used by policymakers and economists in addressing potential issues facing the Canadian economy.

Prerequisites:

Econ 101 and Econ 102

Textbook:

There is no required textbook for this course- readings will be posted on Moodle to accompany course lectures.

Optional:

The following texts may be beneficial for students as a supplemental reference:

Luciani, Patrick. *Economic Myths: Making Sense of Canadian Policy Issues*. Fourth edition. 2004.

Fellows, Flanagan and Shedd. *Economic Issues: A Canadian Perspective*. 2007.

Course Format and Attendance: Students are expected to attend ALL classes- there is no substitute for class attendance in the learning process. As there is no required textbook for the course, most of the background material will come from class lectures, making class attendance extremely important. For each topic, I will provide some light background readings, posted on Moodle, that students are expected to read prior to class. Class time will be spent on class discussions and providing economic theory as a reference to examine the topics covered. As such, class participation is HIGHLY encouraged. Students will be responsible for ALL material presented during lectures. Exam questions will typically consist of short answer questions and will require critical analysis of policy issues using economic theory, as we will do during class.

Evaluation:

The course grade will be based on three methods of evaluation:

In-Class Debate Exercises (2 per semester)	30% (15% each)
Midterm Exam.....	30%
Final Exam.....	40%

In-Class Debates

As this course is designed to examine issues in Canadian policy, you will have the opportunity to investigate and debate policy options amongst the class. Each student will actively participate in a pre-determined policy issue debate on TWO separate occasions during the semester.

For each debate, students will be randomly assigned into teams of 4-6 students to prepare one side of a policy issue for presentation to the class. Two teams will present their arguments, and two other teams will be assigned to evaluate and critique the teams presenting. The remainder of the class will observe and decide the results of each debate.

Grading will be allocated as follows:

Each of the two debates will be worth 15% of the final grade for the debating groups (for a total of 30% throughout the semester). 5% will come from the evaluation group, 5% will come from the presenting group's own evaluation of its preparation and 5% will come from the professor.

Students are required to be present in-class for their scheduled debate days. If a student misses their debate with a valid, documented absence, the weight from that debate will be re-allocated evenly across the remaining course grades.

Midterm Exam

The midterm is scheduled for October 24. Students missing a midterm exam due to illness, unexpected emergencies or other conflicts must notify the Dean's office and provide proper authenticated documentation in order to be considered for a make-up exam, as outlined in Section 3.9 of the Academic Calendar.

Final Exam

The final exam will be cumulative and will cover the breadth of topics covered during the entire course. The time and date will be determined by the Registrar.

Course Topics

- 1. Unemployment and the Labor Market**
 - a. Why Do We Waste Our Labor Resources? (Fellows, Ch. 13)
- 2. Inflation and Money Supply**
 - a. Inflation, Banking and Money: Can Bankers Create Too Much Money? (Fellows, Ch. 14)
- 3. Higher Education**
 - a. Economics of Higher Education: Who Benefits and Who Pays the Bills? (Fellows, Ch. 3)
 - b. Education and Wages (Luciani, Ch. 16)
- 4. The Brain-Drain**
 - a. Canada is (or is not) suffering a brain drain (Luciani, Ch. 29)
- 5. Minimum Wage Laws**
 - a. Minimum Wages and the Working Poor (Luciani, Ch. 4)
- 6. International Trade and Policy**
 - a. Protectionism vs Free Trade: Who Wins from Trade? (Fellows, Ch. 12)
 - b. NAFTA was a bad deal for Canada (Luciani, Ch. 7)
- 7. Exchange Rates**
 - a. Valuing the Dollar (Luciani, Ch. 8)
 - b. Buying Canadian (Luciani, Ch. 9)
- 8. Social Security**
- 9. Health Economics**
 - a. Health Issues: Is It Worth the Costs? (Fellows, Ch. 6)
 - b. Supply and Demand for Health Professionals (Luciani, Ch. 5)
 - c. Obesity, Health and Economics (Luciani, Ch. 6)
- 10. Economics of Sport**
 - a. The Economics of Professional Sports: What is the Real Score? (Fellows, Ch. 11)
- 11. Crime and Punishment**
 - a. Economics of Crime and Its Prevention: How Much is Too Much? (Fellows, Ch. 4)
- 12. Other Potential Topics:**
 - a. **Legalized Gambling**
 - b. **Natural Resource Allocation**
 - c. **Discrimination**
 - d. **Poverty and Development**
 - e. **Government Debt and Taxation**

Note: I will try to adhere to this order of topics, but may re-order topics due to scheduling constraints or depending on student interest

Important Dates

Wed, Sept 7- First day of course

Tues, Sept 13- Last day to change first-term or full-year courses

Fri, Oct 7- Fall Study Day (no classes)

Mon, Oct 3-Wed, Oct 5- **First Round of Debates**

Mon, Oct 10- Thanksgiving (**NO CLASS**)

Wed, Oct 19- **Midterm Exam**

Fri, Nov 4- Last day to drop first-term three-credit courses

Fri, Nov 11- Remembrance Day (no classes)

Mon, Nov 14-Wed, Nov 16- **Second Round of Debates**

Wed, Nov 30- Last day of course

Wed, Dec 7- Exam period begins

Statement on Equitable Learning

Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space – both real and virtual – that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity.

Please feel free to talk with me about your questions or concerns about equity in our classroom or in the STFX community in general. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair/Coordinator of the Department/Program or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor. Please note that a Human Rights and Equity Advisor will soon be appointed. In the meantime, students, faculty, or staff may also contact the Director of Human Resources at hr@stfx.ca or the Office of the AVP&P