

California State University, Sacramento
Department of Economics

Economics 189: Economics at the Movies
Fall, 2007

Professor David Lang

M 5:30 PM - 6:45 PM & W 5:30 PM – end of movie (Mariposa 1001)

Course Description:

This course analyzes the use and treatment of economic theory and history in popular American films. Emphasis is placed on the topics of game theory, industrial organization, entrepreneurship, law and economics, labor economics, the stock market, and American economic history. The entertainment industry will also be examined from an economic perspective.

3 units. No Prerequisites.

Learning Objectives:

The main objective of this course is for the student to develop an appreciation of the various topics in the field of Economics as well as an understanding of the representation (and misrepresentation) of economic theories in the motion picture industry. Students will learn the role of economics in the film industry as well as the role of the film industry as an educational medium and how it guides our understanding and perspective of economic topics.

Contact Information:

Office: Tahoe Hall 3016

Office Phone: 916-278-7077

Email: lang@csus.edu

Office Hours: TTh 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM, and by appointment

Grading:

Attendance/Participation: Attending both the lectures and the viewing of the films is required. Role will be taken at the beginning of every movie shown. In addition, students are expected to participate in the discussions that ensue during the lecture days. There are 28 days of course attendance – I will give you 3 free passes here.

Group Project and Extra Credit: All students will be required to participate in a group project involving predicting the box office outcomes of movies that are released in the theaters during the semester. Your group will be graded on your ability to document and explain your

decisions. Extra credit will be awarded based on your group's performance compared to the other groups.

“Short” Essays: One week after each movie is completed, students must turn in a short essay discussing the economic content of that movie. These essays should be 1 page in length, with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, left, and right, in 12-point font, and double-spaced. I will take the best 10 of these to determine your “short” essay grade.

“Big” Essay: Students are expected to write a 3- to 5-page essay on the economic content of a film *not* included on the syllabus. The film must be approved by the instructor.

Final Exam: The final exam will cover the economic topics of the films and lectures. The questions will be a combination of multiple choice and essay-type questions.

The overall grade in the class will be based on the following:

<i>Attendance/participation:</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>Group Project:</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Essays – “Short”:</i>	<i>40%</i>
<i>Essay – “Big”:</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Final Exam:</i>	<i><u>20%</u></i>
	<i>100%</i>

Tentative Course Outline:

Week	Movie	Topic
1	NO MOVIE	INTRO TO COURSE
2	<i>Monsters Inc.</i> (2001) 92 min.	Scarcity; Resource Economics
3	<i>Modern Times</i> (1936) 87 min.	The Labor Market
4	<i>Tucker: The Man & His Dream</i> (1988) 110 min.	Entrepreneurship
5	<i>Roger & Me</i> (1989) 91 min. <i>WalMart: The High Cost of Low Price</i> (2005) 95 min	Industrial Organization
6	<i>Barbarians at the Gate</i> (1993) 107 min.	Mergers and Acquisitions
7	<i>Boiler Room</i> (2000) 118 min.	Stock Market & Finance
8	<i>Other People's Money</i> (1991) 103 min.	Cost-Benefit Analysis
9	<i>Trading Places</i> (1983) 118 min.	Futures & Classes in America
10	<i>The War Room</i> (1993) 97 min.	Political Economics
11	<i>The Rainmaker</i> (1997) 135 min. or <i>Erin Brockovich</i> (2000) 130 min.	Law & Economics
12	NO MOVIE - THANKSGIVING	THE MOVIE INDUSTRY
13	<i>Traffic</i> (2000) 147 min.	Illicit Economic Activities
14	<i>Blood Diamond</i> (2006) 143 min.	Int'l Trade; Economic Violence
15	NO MOVIE	WRAP-UP