California State University, Sacramento
Department of Economics

Economics 152: Economics of Education
Professor David Lang

Course Description:
This course will provide an introduction to the various aspects of the economics of education. It applies the tools of economic analysis to educational policy and problem solving. Topics include cost-benefit analysis of education, the signaling vs. human capital debate, race and gender issues in education, education production functions, and financing education at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Emphasis placed on individual and social choice in education. 3 units. Prerequisite: ECON 001B or ECON 104

Learning Objectives:
The main objective of the course is for students to be able to discuss the role of education in the field of economics. Students will learn to apply the tools of economic analysis to educational policy and problem solving. Students will be able to analyze the costs and benefits of education from the perspective of the individual as well as the economy as a whole. By the completion of the course, students will feel comfortable discussing the major topics and debates in the current economics of education literature.

Required Texts:
The only “text” for this course is the online course reader. There may also be additional readings handed out in class.

Contact Information:
Office: Tahoe Hall 3016
Office Phone: 916-278-7077
Email: lang@csus.edu
Office Hours: MWF 9:00-9:50 AM, and by appointment

Grading:
Attendance: Attendance is a requirement in this course. It is important that you understand that not attending is very likely to lower your grade and, more crucially, your understanding of the material. There will be a daily sign-in sheet. You will be allowed to miss up to 4 class meetings (out of the 45 total) without it counting against your grade. This will be discussed in more detail below.

It is your responsibility to get any material that you missed and yours alone.

1 Important sidenote: Last semester I had a problem in one of my classes of students “signing each other in” if someone was not in attendance. Please understand that I view this as an act of academic dishonesty. As such, if I catch this occurring – and if it happens, I will catch it – both these students will receive a zero for participation in the course and it will be reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
Participation: I believe that participation is an essential component to the learning process. As such, participation is a significant factor in your grade. There are many ways to participate. Readings will be assigned for each class. This reading must be done in advance of the appropriate class. In class, we will have discussions concerning these readings. You are expected to be an active participant in these discussions by voicing your opinion. I understand that some students are not as comfortable as others speaking in class. However, you will be graded on both the level and thoughtfulness of your participation.

Obviously, good participation in class begins with good attendance. If you are not in class, it will absolutely hurt your participation grade. More specifically, every absence beyond the 4th will result in a 2.5 percentage point reduction in your earned participation grade. So, for example, if you earn an 85% for your participation grade and miss 10 days, your adjusted participation grade will be 70%.

Group Presentations: Throughout the semester, groups of students will be assigned to lead class discussion on the selected readings. If you are a discussion leader, it is your responsibility to have a more thorough understanding of the topic than the rest of the class. It is your group’s job to insure that the discussion is moving along nicely by summarizing the arguments in the readings, asking insightful questions, and provoking thoughtful responses from your classmates.

“Short” Essays: There will be 4 short written assignments – each ranging from 2-3 pages in length. These essays will be based on the topics that we discuss in class and the readings.

“Big” Essay: There will also be a longer 10-12 page research paper due at the end of the course. You will receive some direction on the assignment later in the course, but, for the most part, this essay will be an opportunity to write on a topic of your choosing.

Extra Credit: Occasionally, I may provide in-class or out-of-class opportunities for extra credit. These will be the only situations where extra credit may occur.

Begging for an extra credit assignment, while always amusing, will never be rewarded.

Grade Distribution: Your overall grade in the class will be based on the following:

- Participation: 30%
- Group Presentations: 15%
- “Short” Essays: 30%
- “Big” Essay: 25%

100%
Your overall grade for the course will be determined based on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 – 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 92.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 – 89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 – 86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 – 82.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 – 79.9%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 – 76.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 72.9%</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 – 69.9%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 – 66.9%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 62.9%</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 59.9%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Special Note on Plagiarism:

As a courtesy to you, I have attached the University’s policies concerning plagiarism. Please take a few minutes to read it over. It comes directly from the CSUS University Policy Manual which can be found online at [http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual](http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual).

“Plagiarism is a form of cheating. At CSUS plagiarism is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person’s contribution. Regardless of the means of appropriation, incorporation of another’s work into one’s own requires adequate identification and acknowledgement. Plagiarism is doubly unethical because it deprives the author of rightful credit and gives credit to someone who has not earned it. Acknowledgement is not necessary when the material used is common knowledge. Plagiarism at CSUS includes but is not limited to:

1. The act of incorporating into one’s own work the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another’s work without giving appropriate credit thereby representing the product as entirely one's own. Examples include not only word-for-word copying, but also the "mosaic" (i.e., interspersing a few of one’s own words while, in essence, copying another’s work), the paraphrase (i.e., rewriting another’s work while still using the other’s fundamental idea or theory); fabrication (i.e., inventing or counterfeiting sources), ghost-writing (i.e., submitting another’s work as one’s own) and failure to include quotation marks on material that is otherwise acknowledged; and

2. Representing as one’s own another’s artistic or scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawing, sculptures, or similar works.”

Sanctions for plagiarism comes in 2 possible forms – Academic Sanctions and Administrative Sanctions. If I find that you have committed an act of plagiarism, you will fail this course and I will report my findings to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Judicial Officer will then decide whether to allow you to continue at CSUS.

*My strong advice for you is to not get involved in this!*
Readings:

I. Introduction; Human Capital and the Role of Government in Education


II. Benefit-Cost Analysis of Education; Rates of Return


III. Signaling and Screening Models; The “Great Debate”

IV. Education and Economic Growth


V. Race and Gender Issues


VI. Productivity

VII. Teacher Markets and Policy


VIII. Taxation for Education; Financing Elementary and Secondary Schools


IX. Vouchers and Choice

- Chubb, John and Moe, Terry, “Choice is a Panacea,” The Brookings Review, (Summer, 1990), pp. 4-12.

X. Financing Higher Education