

University of San Francisco
Department of Economics
ECON 368-01: Economics, Politics and Culture
Fall 2025, Wed 1:00-2:45pm
Lone Mountain 141B

Instructor: Professor Jesse K. Anttila-Hughes

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Economics 368: Economics, Politics, and Culture is an undergraduate class that offers an introduction to thinking about the broad interaction of politics and culture across the social sciences from an economist's point of view. The course provides an overview of key readings and concepts related to what are often regarded as topics outside the discipline, including topics from moral philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science. The primary work of the course is reading and interpreting academic papers, participating in weekly warm-up activities, and answering question sets.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Read and interpret introductory papers on social theory from the broader social science literature, understand the significance and meaning of equations and relations in those theories, and relate those theories to larger, abstract concepts in the world.
2. Relate real world problems to theoretical social models, and identify ways in which models do and do not improve understandings of empirical problems.
3. Place individual theory papers and models into their context in the social science literature, describing why certain models are viewed as ground breaking and developing an understanding of the history of thought in the human behavioral sciences.
4. Apply theory to predict and interpret economic and social behavior and its responses to different initial conditions and assumptions.
5. Synthesize and incorporate economic understandings into one's larger view of social behavior, processes, and the individual's roles and responsibilities in society.

READINGS AND RESOURCES:

Text: The primary materials for this class are the lecture slides and readings, which are all free over Canvas.

Canvas: I will post slides for lecture, assignments, papers, supporting material for the course, etc. on Canvas throughout the semester. Please remember to check Canvas regularly for announcements.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend all lectures in person, as much of the class is built on participation. Failure to attend class in a consistent manner may result in punitive measures, and will impact your grade in the class. Economics is not an easy subject, and we will be covering material in class that is not covered in any of the texts or readings.

Class participation is expected and strongly encouraged. Please feel free to ask questions at any point during lecture, and don't be surprised if I ask you the occasional direct question. Conversely, I understand that students have different levels of comfort as far as public speaking is concerned, so if you feel intimidated asking a question in front of the class I ask that you please feel welcome to either come to my office hours or just come after class to talk

Warm Ups: Every class will begin with a warmup, that is intended to consolidate basic themes from the readings and set the tone for the class. Warm ups are graded check / check plus, and can be handed in either electronically during class or physically on a sheet of paper.

Question Sets: Question sets are due throughout the course and are intended to help you learn the material and practice your understandings. I strongly recommend that you devote sufficient time to both them and the readings. Please feel free to talk with other students about question set problems, review online resources related the questions, etc. but do **not** simply copy answers from other students or the internet. I consider this to be a form of academic honesty (see below), take it very seriously, and will be automatically screening sets for evidence of plagiarism. Credit will generally not be given for late sets.

Final Exam: The final exam will be cumulative, and will closely follow the question sets in content and structure. There will be no make-up exam, and no extra time will be given to students who arrive late to class on the day of an exam.

Grading: The grade distribution for the class will be as follows:

- 10-12 Question sets: 25%
- Weekly warm ups: 25%
- Class discussion: 25%
- Final exam: 25%

I will not be grading the class on a curve, so as long as you understand the material and can answer the question sets you should do quite well in the class. I reserve the right to adjust final grades up or down by a reasonable amount for appropriate reasons.

ADDITIONAL COURSE-RELATED RESOURCES AND CONCERNS

Academic Integrity

As a Jesuit institution committed to cura personalis—the care and education of the whole person—USF has an obligation to embody and foster the values of honesty and integrity. USF upholds the standards of honesty and integrity from all members of the academic community. All students are expected to know and adhere to the University's Honor Code. You can find the full text of the code online at www.usfca.edu/academic_integrity. The policy covers:

- Plagiarism — intentionally or unintentionally representing the words or ideas of another person as your own; failure to properly cite references; manufacturing references.
- Working with another person when independent work is required.
- Submission of the same paper in more than one course without the specific permission of each instructor.
- Submitting a paper written by another person or obtained from the internet.
- The penalties for violation of the policy may include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade in the course, and/or a referral to the Academic Integrity Committee.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or disabling condition, or if you think you may have a disability, please contact USF Student Disability Services (SDS) at 415 422-2613 within the first week of class, or immediately upon onset of disability, to speak with a disability specialist.

If you are determined eligible for reasonable accommodations, please meet with your disability specialist so they can arrange to have your accommodation letter sent to me, and we will discuss your needs for this course. For more information, please visit: <http://www.usfca.edu/sds> or call (415) 422-2613.

Behavioral Expectations

All students are expected to behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies (see <http://www.usfca.edu/fogcutter/>). Open discussion and disagreement is encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. There are also a variety of behaviors that, while not against a specific University policy, may create disruption in this course. Students whose behavior is disruptive or who fail to comply with the instructor may be dismissed from the class for the remainder of the class period and may need to meet with the instructor or Dean prior to returning to the next class period. If necessary, referrals may also be made to the Student Conduct process for violations of the Student Conduct Code.

Learning & Writing Center

The Learning & Writing Center provides assistance to all USF students in pursuit of academic success. Peer tutors provide regular review and practice of course materials in the subjects of Math, Science, Business, Economics, Nursing and Languages. Other content areas can be made available by student request. To schedule an appointment, log on to TutorTrac at <https://tutortrac.usfca.edu>.

Students may also take advantage of writing support provided by Rhetoric and Language Department instructors and academic study skills support provided by Learning Center professional staff. For more information about these services contact the Learning & Writing Center at (415) 422-6713, email: lwc@usfca.edu or stop by our office in Cowell 215. Information can also be found on our website at www.usfca.edu/lwc.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Our diverse staff offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call 415-422-6352 for an initial consultation appointment. Having a crisis at 3 AM? We are still here for you. Telephone consultation through CAPS After Hours is available between the hours of 5:00 PM to 8:30 AM; call the above number and press 2.

Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on USFs campus with the University. Here are other resources:

- To report any sexual misconduct, students may visit Anna Bartkowski (UC 5th floor) or see many other options by visiting our website: www.usfca.edu/student_life/safer
- Students may speak to someone confidentially, or report a sexual assault confidentially by contacting Counseling and Psychological Services at 415-422-6352.
- To find out more about reporting a sexual assault at USF, visit USFs Callisto website at: www.usfca.callistocampus.org.
- For an off-campus resource, contact San Francisco Women Against Rape (SFWAR) (415) 647-7273 (www.sfwar.org).

Student Accounts - Last day to withdraw with tuition reversal

Students who wish to have the tuition charges reversed on their student account should withdraw from the course(s) by the end of the business day on the last day to withdraw with tuition credit (census date) for the applicable course(s) in which the student is enrolled. Please note that the last day to withdraw with tuition credit may vary by course. The last day to withdraw with tuition credit (census date) listed in the Academic Calendar is applicable only to courses which meet for the standard 15-week semester. To find what the last day to withdraw with tuition credit is for a specific course, please visit the Online Class Schedule at www.usfca.edu/schedules.

Financial Aid - FAFSA priority filing deadline (undergraduates only)

March 2 - Priority filing deadline for FAFSA (The Free Application for Federal Student Aid - <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>) for continuing undergraduates.

GENERAL CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:

- The 2020s have been an unusual and upsetting time for many of us. Please feel free to presume that I will be kind and understanding of any problems you have, and please do not hesitate to ask me for help, guidance, advice, extensions, etc. Come to my office hours if you're having trouble.
- I expect everyone in the class to be polite and respectful of everyone else. Please feel free to approach me if you feel that anyone in the class (including me!) is not abiding by this rule.
- I take academic dishonesty VERY seriously. Cheating on exams, copying homework answers from other students, reproducing online or other material without citation, passing off ChatGPT or LLM output as your own work, and similar offenses can result in penalties ranging from a zero grade for the assignment to a failing grade for the class and referral to the Dean's office. If you are in doubt about the academic appropriateness of a given action, I encourage you to ask me.

NOTABLE DATES:

Tuesday, Aug 19th: First day of classes

Friday, Sept. 5th: USF census date (*last day to drop classes with a refund*)

Monday-Tuesday Oct 13-14th: Fall break, no classes

Friday, Oct 31st: drop / withdraw deadline

Thursday-Friday, Nov. 27-28th: Thanksgiving Recess

Wednesday, Dec. 3rd: Last Day of Classes

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 12:30-2:30 PM In Class Final Exam

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 – Economics, Politics, and Culture in 2024

Reading:

CORE – Ch. 1 – The capitalist revolution

Week 2 – Economics in context

Reading:

Fourcade, Ollion and Algan – 2015 – The Superiority of Economists

Bowles and Carlin - 2019 - What Students Learn in Economics 101 - Time for a Change

Week 3 - Social welfare and social choice

Reading:

Sen - 1999 - The Possibility of Social Choice

CORE – Ch. 5 – Property and power: Mutual gains and conflict

Week 4 – Social dilemmas as games

Reading:

CORE – Ch. 4 – Social Interactions

Bowles Behavior, Institutions, and Evolution Ch. 1

Week 5 – Institutions as the rules of the game

Reading:

North – 1991 – Institutions

Nunn – 2014 – Historical development

Week 6 – Institutional Nuances

Reading:

Corno Hildebrandt and Voena - 2020 - Age of Marriage, Weather Shocks, and the Direction of Marriage Payments

Ostrom – 2000 - Collective action and the evolution of social norms

Week 7 – Social Norms

Reading:

Young - 2015 - The Evolution of Social Norms

Alsan and Wanamaker - 2018 - Tuskegee and the Health of Black Men

Banerjee et al - 2019 - The Entertaining Way to Behavioral Change - Fighting HIV with MTV

Lowes and Montero - 2021 - The Legacy of Colonial Medicine in Central Africa

Week 8 – Social Preferences and Psychology

Reading:

Bowles Behavior, Institutions, and Evolution Ch.3 – Preferences and Behavior

Falk et al. – 2018 - Global evidence on economic preferences

Week 9 – Synthesizing behavioral models

Reading:

- Aumann - 2019 - A synthesis of behavioural and mainstream economics
- Wilson, Ostrom, and Cox - 2013 - Generalizing the core design principles for the efficacy of groups
- Ruggeri et al. - 2020 - Replicating patterns of prospect theory for decision under risk

Week 10 – Culture as shared models and rational rules

Reading:

- Denzau and North - 1994 – Shared mental model: Ideologies and Institutions
- McCall - 2005 - The Complexity of Intersectionality

Week 11 – Cultural Evolution

Reading:

- Nunn – 2020 – History as Evolution
- Patterson – 2015 – Making Sense of Culture

Week 12 – The Coevolution of Institutions and Culture

Reading:

- Currie et al. - 2021 - The cultural evolution and ecology of institutions
- Alesina and Giuliano – 2015 – Culture and Institutions

Week 13 - Political Economy I: Evolving Towards Democracy

Reading:

- Acemoglu and Robinson - 2016 – Paths to Inclusive Political Institutions
- Egorov and Sonin - 2020 – The Political Economics of Non-democracy

Week 14 - Political Economy II: Democratic and Inequality

Reading:

- Mukand and Rodrik – 2020 – The political economy of liberal democracy
- Acemoglu et al. – 2015 – Democracy, Redistribution, and Inequality
- Jackson - 2019 - A Typology of Social Capital and Associated Network Measures

Week 15 – Political Economy III: Economics, Politics and Culture in the 21st Century

Reading:

- Piketty and Saez - 2014 - Inequality in the long run
- Mulder et al. - 2009 - Intergenerational Wealth Transmission and the Dynamics of Inequality in Small-Scale Societies