

ECN 200T
Economics and Film

J-term 2022

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Class meets: MTWRF 1:00-4:00pm

Room: CC204

Course Description and Objectives

The best films tell compelling stories about love, loss, crime, war, social upheaval, and most everything in between. This makes film a great medium to learn economic concepts, which pervade so many aspects of life.

This course will use film to introduce students to economic concepts and the impacts they have on people and institutions. The films incorporate such concepts as markets, production, corporations, asymmetric information, the prisoner's dilemma, immigration, education, the environment, poverty, wealth and income inequality, speculation, asset price bubbles, and public policy. We will evaluate each film's depiction of economic issues, the historical and economic context of the film's production, and how filmmakers use their craft to shape our relation to these ideas. More specifically, we will examine how the medium of film uses lighting, music, repetition, framing, camera angles, etc. to influence audience perception.

No background in economics is required: the course will introduce all the concepts needed to appreciate the films and understand the economics in them. You will see that anyone, regardless of their major or background, can learn economics and see how it touches nearly all aspects of life.

Learning outcomes. Students will:

- Explain economic concepts and principles using examples
- Identify and critique a storyteller's portrayal of economic concepts and principles
- Improve their writing skills

Readings

There is no required textbook for you to purchase.

I will post pre-reading materials and discussion questions for each film on Schoology.

[Recommended reading: *Naked Economics: Undressing the Dismal Science \(Fully updated & revised edition, 2019\)* by Charles Wheelan.](#) This is a fun and highly readable book that explains basic economic concepts using loads of real world examples. It does not connect to the films we're screening in this course and it's fine if you read it later, or never. But if you're a business major, or just interested in better understanding how the economy works, *Naked Economics* is a terrific little book for you. It's also pretty affordable (Amazon has it for \$12 in paperback or \$10 for Kindle).

Course Requirements

The following table lists the components of your course grade, with approximate weights.

20%	Essay 1	due 11:00pm Thu 1/13
20%	Essay 2	due 11:00pm Fri 1/21
30%	Essay 3	due 11:00pm Fri 1/28
30%	Class participation and attendance	Throughout semester

Essays. Each essay will be 3-4 pages of double-spaced text. Essays 1 and 2 will be film reviews. Essay 3 will be a comparative essay. Instructions will be posted in Schoology soon.

Attendance and Participation. In this course, we watch films and we discuss them. To do these things, you have to be physically present in class. And when you're in class, you have to be fully present mentally—if you're not paying attention to the films, or the class discussion, or the (fairly rare) bits of lecture, then you're only present in appearance, which isn't good enough. Be fully present so you can get the most out of this course, and so the rest of us can benefit from your discussion contributions and insightful questions about the films.

What to do if you miss class. If you miss class for any reason, there is makeup work you will need to do if you are physically able. The makeup work involves watching the film on your own and answering the posted discussion questions in writing. See Schoology for more info.

Mask Requirement

Carthage College requires masks to be worn in all indoor spaces, including our classroom, regardless of vaccination status. Students must wear masks properly, fully covering the nose and mouth, with a tight seal to prevent airborne virus particles from coming in or out.

[Click here for Carthage's mask requirement info.](#)

[This news article on N95, KN95, and KF94 masks may be helpful.](#)

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Other information about this course

Getting help when you need it. I am here to help, and your success is important to me. If you need help or have questions, you can email me, catch me after class, or we can set an appointment for a Zoom call at a time that works for you. If you want to talk to me on the phone, I'm happy to set up a call at a time that works for you, just let me know.

How I communicate with you outside of class. I regularly post announcements on Schoology, and I occasionally use @carthage.edu email for announcements, so you will need to check both every day.

Email etiquette. When emailing me, please use your @carthage.edu email account. Please allow 24 hours for a reply—though I will make every effort to reply sooner if I can.

Pro tip: Out there in the real world, people who don't know you very well will form an impression of your intelligence and professionalism based on the way you communicate in email. Keep this in mind when you email a professor, employer, or prospective employer.

Class conduct. Each student is expected to help me maintain a positive and respectful classroom environment where everyone one of us is valued equally as a human being—regardless of our race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, G.P.A., income, background, or political views. Students will have different viewpoints about some of the issues addressed in our films; when we discuss them, we all need to do two things: First, be sincerely respectful of people who have different opinions or take different positions than our own. Second, listen to them with an open mind; give them a fair chance to support their positions, and acknowledge if they make good points. This openness to opposing viewpoints accomplishes some important things: First, it helps us remember that people with opposing viewpoints are sincere and intelligent, just like we are. Second, it helps us remember to re-examine our own views occasionally, which is healthy. Third, it helps us foster constructive relationships with people who have opposing viewpoints; these relationships are often mutually beneficial because solving complex problems often requires more than one perspective. For example, in politics, liberals need conservatives and conservatives need liberals; neither group can solve society's problems without the insights of the other.

Information about Carthage Resources (health and counseling, learning accessibility, writing) and Policies (student code and academic dishonesty)

The Carthage Health and Counseling Center. HCC supports students by addressing physical, mental, and emotional well-being. All services are free and confidential and are available to currently enrolled, full-time undergraduate students. Health services include the assessment and treatment of minor illness and injury. Diagnostic testing, complimentary over-the-counter medications, and referrals to off-campus providers are all available. Our licensed counselors help students with challenges that can be resolved with short-term, solution-focused counseling. Some topics discussed during counseling include depression and anxiety, traumatic experiences, gender and sexuality, relationship concerns, stress management, and academic challenges. More details - including info about appointments - can be found at carthage.edu/health-counseling.

Information for individuals with disabilities. Carthage College strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to your disability (including mental health, learning disorders and chronic medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you also need to register with Diane Schowalter (dschowalter1@carthage.edu) in Learning Accessibility Services. For more information, <https://www.carthage.edu/learning-accessibility/>

Writing resources. Writing is the most important skill you will develop at Carthage College. To get the most out of your college education, use every writing assignment as an opportunity to improve your skills. Carthage offers effective resources to help, including the Writing Center. The Writing Center offers free individual appointments with writing tutors and other online writing assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.carthage.edu/writing-center/>. Also, check out the resources I've posted at Schoology.

Academic dishonesty. All students must familiarize themselves with and agree to the Carthage Student Community Code, which discusses academic dishonesty and the consequences of committing acts of academic dishonesty. I support these policies and enforce them. The Code is available here: <http://www.carthage.edu/campus-life/code/academic-concerns/>.

That's the official blurb. Here's what I really think: There is no honor in getting a grade you did not earn. If you find yourself in a position in which you can't get a good grade without cheating, take the bad grade and wear it like a badge of honor—it means you did the right thing, you didn't cheat, you accepted responsibility for your mistake. The bad grade may sting, but you'll be a lot less likely to allow yourself to get into this position next time.

When some students get away with cheating, the job-market value of everyone else's Carthage degree falls a little: those who cheated go on the job market without the skills and knowledge their transcript says they should have; this dilutes the reputation of a Carthage education among prospective employers. As a result, it becomes a little harder for other Carthage graduates to get good jobs. Simply put, those who cheated are advancing their own interests at the expense of everyone else's.

All of us—students and faculty alike—must develop a culture that views cheating as stealing from other Carthage students and alumni, a culture that values integrity more than grades. Please join me in this effort.