

Metin M. Coşgel

Office : Monteith 316

Hours : 10-11 T and Th

Phone: 486 4662

Email: Metin.Cosgel@UConn.Edu

Web: www.cosgel.uconn.edu

ABOUT THE COURSE

This course is intended primarily for students in UConn's Honors or the Economics Scholars Programs (also open to other students with instructor's consent). Rather than being structured around a particular topic or method in economics, it aims to prepare students to do creative, independent research, particularly in writing a senior thesis in economics. It does this by providing opportunities for:

- 1) practice in writing and oral presentation
- 2) observing and commenting on research and writing by UConn Economics faculty, and
- 3) identifying interesting questions in everyday life and analyzing them economically.

TEXTBOOKS

Although there are no textbook assigned for the topics to be discussed, I have ordered Deirdre McCloskey's little book appropriately titled *Economical Writing* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1999) to help you with your writing.

REQUIREMENTS:

There will be four types of assignments:

1. You will do several in-class writing assignments for practice, each time focusing on a different aspect of writing (see below for details). (*10 % of course grade*)
2. Each student will be asked to make a short (15-20 minutes) presentation to the class on an everyday economic problem of his or her choice. You can choose the problem based on your own interests or experience or from a current event you've seen on media. Two important components of this presentation are your answers to the following questions:
 - a. What happened? That is, describe an economically interesting problem that needs explanation. The more specific, interesting, and counter-intuitive; the better.
 - b. Why did it happen? Use economic theory to explain the problem and if possible find evidence to support your explanation.

It would be a good idea to prepare a brief (one page) handout for the class that outlines your answers to these questions. (*20%*)

3. You are also asked to write a brief (2-5 pages) abstract of an idea worth exploring further and an annotated bibliography of most important professional publications (i.e., books and articles, not websites) one would need to master in tackling this problem. Those of you planning to write a senior thesis are expected to explore a potential area for the thesis. Others can further elaborate on their presentation or some other research project of their interest. In any case, you are expected to demonstrate your ability to lay out a creative research agenda, at a minimum providing a good answer to the question of "What happened?" and a preliminary answer to "Why did it happen?". This assignment is due by the last day of class, April 26. You are welcome, indeed encouraged, to show me preliminary drafts of your progress on this paper earlier in the semester. (*30%*)
4. Finally, you will write a series of papers based on class presentations by UConn faculty. About two weeks before each presentation, you will be assigned readings and given a brief question on which to write a short (2-5 pages) paper. These papers will be due on the day of the presentation. (*40%*)

We will work on the following aspects of writing. These categories will also be the basis for evaluating your writing assignments, weights depending on the nature of the assignment.

1. **Researching the topic:** Were relevant and good quality reference materials researched and mastered? Make sure to use an adequate number and a balanced mix of printed books, journal articles, and internet resources.
2. **Documentation and Citation:** Were all sources documented and cited appropriately? Make sure to include at the end of your paper a complete bibliography of the sources you have consulted and cite them adequately and consistently (i.e., use one style of citation) in the text. Avoid plagiarism and provide the proper citation for all direct quotations, paraphrased ideas, and statistical and other information that come from these sources.
3. **Argument:** Is there a central idea, a thesis that is consistently sustained throughout the paper? How clear, sophisticated, and original is the idea? Does it convey a clear knowledge of the material and recognition of alternative perspectives?
4. **Support:** How well is your argument supported? Are the contents clearly and consistently relevant to the main topic? Are examples, quotations, statistical and other information skillfully used to support the argument(s)?
5. **Organization:** Is the paper well-organized? Make sure that your objective is clarified at the beginning, each section has a clear role in meeting the objective, and that ideas flow logically from one paragraph or section to the next.
6. **Paragraphs:** Are the paragraphs coherent and well-organized? Is there one clear idea per paragraph, introduced by a clear topic sentence and developed consistently by other well-connected sentences?
7. **Sentences:** Are the sentences efficient and well-constructed? Work on constructing clear, concise sentences by avoiding words and phrases that do not fit well. Use vague pronouns and passive voice only when absolutely necessary.
8. **Mechanics:** Are the mechanical elements of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) free of errors? Using your word processor to check “spelling and grammar” before printing the paper can go a long way. But be careful: your word processor does not know if you meant “there” or “their”. You also need to proofread yourself to eliminate all errors.

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Writing Exercise	Student Presentation	Faculty Presentation
Jan. 18	Introduction to the course, discussion of assignments, scheduling presentations.		
Jan. 25	Researching the topic		Coşgel
Feb. 1	Documentation and Citation	Koning	
Feb. 8			Segerson
Feb. 15	Argument and Support	Sharma, Barton	
Feb. 22			Langlois
Mar. 1	Organization	Nur, Liftig	
Mar. 15			Furtado
Mar. 22	Paragraphs	Prairie, Martell	
Mar. 29			Heffley
Apr. 5	Sentences, Mechanics	May, Okrasa	
Apr. 12			Kimenyi
Apr. 19	NO CLASS		
Apr. 26		McMahon, Doyle	