

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

The writing component has two objectives: (1) to enhance your learning about how economic concepts and analytical methods enable better examination of environmental and resource use problems, and (2) to improve your ability to communicate in writing. The major writing assignment is to prepare an economic analysis of policy alternatives for an environmental or natural resource problem. You will develop this policy paper during the semester, submitting portions of it for review and evaluation at designated points along the way. You will be able to relate class readings and discussions to the problem, giving you opportunities to apply what you learn.

AUDIENCE: Consider yourself an economist recommending whether a decision-maker should expend funds or enact regulations to correct an environmental or resource problem. You must convince her/him that this issue is important enough to put an effort into -- or that no action is justified. You need to provide a) the analysis behind the position you recommend on this issue and b) ammunition for moving the solution through the decision structure.

POLICY PAPER: Your task is to write a policy report that is not more than 8 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 1" margins all around, 12 point type or larger). You also may include up to three pages of tables or appendix materials. In addition to the report, you will provide a one-page Recommendation Memo as the top page so that the decision-maker can get the essence of your analysis quickly. (Maximum length: $8+3+1=12$ pages)

THE ANALYTICAL TASK: Some students find it helpful to work in teams; others find it a burden. By 9/7/04 you need to let me know whether you prefer to work with a team. To the extent there are interests in compatible topics, we will form teams for those wishing to use this approach. Credit for the assignment is the same whether you work in a team or as an individual. **Each person will submit his/her own report.** The teams are only to facilitate analysis and discussion.

The task of each individual/team is to analyze the problem, decide what alternatives are available for solving the problem, and conduct whatever studies (data gathering and analysis) you deem necessary to recommend a solution. Each person/team should consult with me as often as needed for answers to questions you may have about your procedures.

I encourage getting expert help, but we must comply with university and federal rules for any surveys or questionnaires that we circulate to students, faculty and staff, or people outside of the university. Discussion with me will ensure that we meet the university and federal requirements. **Any activity that involves more than 9 people outside of the class must have my approval PRIOR to contacting outsiders.**

For those working together as a team, remember that **each** member of the team is to prepare his/her own written report described in the ASSIGNMENTS section below. Everyone may use the team discussions and results in his/her report, but the organization of the report and the writing are to be prepared by each individual. (The team can discuss with me how to allocate the BCA presentation among the team members.)

THE ASSIGNMENTS: There are six pieces:

DUE	TASK
9/9	1. A (paragraph to a page) description of case to be analyzed (selected from list or approved by instructor): summary of the problem and why action should be considered.

- 10/7 2. **Preliminary Draft** of the report. This will include
- your (revised) summary of the problem and reasons why action should be considered.
 - The data and analyses that you plan to include, and as much of the analysis as you can prepare at this stage. (You still may need to complete some analyses, but briefly describe what will be done so I know where you are headed.) Your material should provide an answer to the question: "What does **economic** theory suggest is the **cause** of this problem?" You are playing the role of an economic analyst.
- 11/2 3. TWO COPIES of your **Revised Draft Report** (maximum of 8 pages plus up to 3 pages of figures or tables and a one-page Recommendation Memo) that describes the policy alternatives considered, any data that was collected, how you analyzed the alternatives, and the results of your analysis. Be sure to include a recommendation memo to the decision maker as to which alternative to support/enact. One copy of this draft will be passed on to a peer reviewer whom I select from the class. Each person will receive a report to review. (We shall discuss how to review a paper.)
- 11/9 4. Two copies of your **Peer Review** – you will write about a page to guide the author, and mark-up his/her draft.
- 11/11 I will return the Peer Review to the author along with my review of his/her Revised Draft, and you will get back a copy of the peer review you wrote.
- 11/18 - 5. Each person will give a 10-15 minute presentation on his/her BCA, which will be followed by class discussion. (We shall draw dates from a hat to determine who presents when.) The presentation should reflect revisions based on peer review comments and my comments.
- 12/2
- 12/9 6. **Final Report.** The final report should reflect my comments and peer review comments on earlier drafts, and class input about your BCA. Each person will submit a **portfolio** of the semester's writing that includes the following items. (Submit the copies that you **originally submitted and upon which I have commented.**) These can be in a folder or paper clip – the "cover" need not be fancy.
- Paper 1--Paragraph (up to a page) about case selected
 - Paper 2--Preliminary Draft
 - Paper 3--Revised Draft
 - Paper 4--Peer Review (that you prepared of another student's paper)
 - Paper 5--The other student's peer review of your draft
 - A copy of materials used during your presentation
 - Final revision of your analysis and recommendations, including the Recommendation Memo.

Two of these deadlines above are **extremely important**. On **November 2** two copies of the Revised Draft are due; one copy will be assigned to a peer reviewer, who has only one week to complete the peer review. **IT IS ESSENTIAL** that a copy of your paper be available on November 2 for the reviewer. On **November 9** your peer review is due to me (so that I can review it before returning it to the author of the report you reviewed). Assignments due on each of these dates are important to another student and his/her ability to earn a good grade. Failure to provide the material expected on these dates will be treated as a serious breach of academic etiquette.

GRADING: The writing assignments provide 50% of your course grade, divided as follows.

Paper 1--Paragraph	= 05%
Paper 2--Preliminary Draft	= 05%
Paper 3--Revised Draft	= 15%
Paper 4--Peer review	= 05%
Final Report and presentation materials	= 20%

(The peer review is written to help the author, not me; grading it primarily insures that the assignment is completed in a timely manner. Your presentation counts toward your Class Participation grade.)

For each written assignment, half of the points will be based on your grasp of the subject and your use of economics to analyze the problem. The other half will be based on your skill in presenting a concise, well-organized, grammatically correct, and interesting report. Each written submission will be graded (points, not letter grade) when it is completed during the course, but the evaluation of the Final Report will include points for your response to comments/ evaluation of earlier submissions. (For example, suppose that you receive what you consider to be a low grade on Paper 2. You take the comments into account in revising the report. When I read and grade the final report, I will take "improvement" into account when assigning a grade.)