Course Syllabus

ECON 4500/5500 – Urban and Regional Economics

Professor: E. Anthon Eff
Class: Mondays 6pm – 9pm • BAS S302
Office and Hours: BAS N308 • MWF 10:30am – 12:00pm (or by appointment)
Phone: 616.898.2387 office; 615.898.2520 (Economics and Finance Department)
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Mission of the Jones College of Business:

- Set our students' foundation for life-long learning through high quality learning experiences resulting from quality teaching, classroom interactions, student professional organizations, service learning, and interactions with faculty outside the classroom.

- Further the scope and dissemination of the body of business knowledge through scholarly research that advances our disciplines, enhances teaching/learning, and improves outcomes of for-profit, not-for-profit, and governmental organizations.

- Contribute to the economic development of the region through our outreach programs.

We will produce career-ready undergraduate students, MBA, MAcc, MS, and PhD graduates prepared for career challenges and advancements, significant applied research, and consulting consistent with the expertise of our disciplines.

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the Disability & Access Center (DAC) website and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or dacemail@mtsu.edu
Academic Misconduct:

Middle Tennessee State University takes a strong stance against academic misconduct. Academic Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) **Plagiarism:** The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one’s own without proper attribution. This includes self-plagiarism, which occurs when an author submits material or research from a previous academic exercise to satisfy the requirements of another exercise and uses it without proper citation of its reuse.

(2) **Cheating:** Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. This includes unapproved collaboration, which occurs when a student works with others on an academic exercise without the express permission of the professor. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.

(3) **Fabrication:** Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

To be clear: going online and taking information without proper citations, copying parts of other student’s work, creating information for the purposes of making your paper seem more official, or anything involving taking someone else’s thoughts or ideas without proper attribution is academic misconduct. If you work together on an assignment when it is not allowed, it is academic misconduct. If you have a question about an assignment, please come see me to clarify. Any cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs for violating the academic honesty requirements in the student handbook. They will also result in failure for the course. Remember – ignorance is NOT a defense.

Lottery Scholarship:

To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility.

If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you will not be able to regain eligibility at a later time.

For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form (http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/forms/LOTFOD.pdf) or contact your MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor (http://www.mtsu.edu/one-stop/counselor.php).

Course Description and Objectives:

Urban and Regional Economics examines the spatial aspect of economics. The course focuses on local economies, usually consisting of cities and their hinterlands, though sometimes we will consider larger areas, such as states or multi-state regions (e.g., the southeastern United States). This way of looking at an economy is applicable to any country, and can help us understand why some regions grow and others do not. We can apply what we learn to public policy, as well as to guide business location decisions and investments in real estate markets.

The objectives of this course are to learn basic spatial analysis, using the most appropriate and powerful computational tools, and to acquire an understanding of the spatial patterning of the US economy.
This course contains some lectures and presentations, but is primarily a lab/paper course. It provides numerous opportunities for working in teams and requires students to present their findings to the class.

All students will be asked to use ArcGIS and Excel to analyze and display spatial data. It is not necessary that any student begin the course knowing anything about ArcGIS or any other Geographical Information System (GIS) software. It is expected, however, that the student be able to perform any of the class exercises by semester's end.

All graduate students will, in addition, be required to use R for spatial data analysis. It is highly recommended, though not required, that graduate students have some familiarity with R and with regression analysis before taking the course, a recommendation that is most easily fulfilled by taking ECON 6060 (Econometrics I) prior to ECON 5500.

**Grading:** Consists of the following:

- *Presentations, computer assignments, and class participation* jointly make up 25% of your grade. Computer assignments require that you use Excel and ArcGIS (students enrolled for 5500 will use R in addition to the previously mentioned packages). Many of the presentations and all computer assignments will be done by groups. A peer evaluation, conducted on May 2 (see last page of syllabus), will establish your class participation grade.

- *One book report* worth 25% of your total grade. This should be from 6 to 12 pages in length (double-spaced, 11 point scalable font), and should contain your synthesis of the material, not a simple summary. Book reports will be presented to the class on March 14. These reports give you a chance to choose a topic that interests you; try to find a book that would also make an interesting presentation to the rest of the class. You must show me a book, and receive my approval, by February 22.

- *The final exam* accounts for 25% of the course grade. The exam consists both of hands-on computational exercises and written questions. It will be given *early*, on Monday, April 25, from 6:00-9:00 in the regular classroom. The exam covers everything discussed in class over the entire semester. Graduate students (enrolled in 5500) will have different exam questions from undergraduate students (enrolled in 4500).

- *The term paper* is worth 25% of your total grade. Term papers should be on a topic having to do with urban or regional economics. A list of sample topics is appended, though the list is far from exhaustive. You must clear your topic with me by Monday, March 21. Typical length for these papers is 6-12 pages for 4500 students and 16-20 pages for 5500 students (double-spaced, 11 point scalable font). Selected papers will be presented to the class on May 2.

**Plagiarism warning:** It’s become temptingly easy to copy material off the web, paste it into a paper, and turn it in as ones own work. Beware. The web has made it equally easy for faculty to check a suspicious paper for plagiarism. The penalties for plagiarism are harsh. Protect yourself by learning what constitutes plagiarism (see the course webpage). Avoid paraphrasing, cite all sources, and enclose all verbatim passages in quotes.
Schedule of Topics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tentative topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>Population I</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>Income I</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Feb. 15</td>
<td>Income II</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>Housing I</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Feb. 29</td>
<td>Housing II</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mar. 7</td>
<td>---Spring Break------</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mar. 14</td>
<td>Book Report Presentations</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Mar. 21</td>
<td>Crime</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mar. 28</td>
<td>Employment I</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Apr. 4</td>
<td>Employment II</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Apr. 11</td>
<td>Business location I</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Apr. 18</td>
<td>Business location II</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Apr. 25</td>
<td>----Final Exam------</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>May. 2</td>
<td>Paper Presentations &amp; Peer Evaluation</td>
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- Weeks 1-6 and 9-12 involve analysis of data using *ArcGIS*, *Excel*, and (for graduate students) *R*. All work, including presentations, is done in groups.
- Weeks 8, 13, and 15 consist of individual presentations.
- Week 14 is the final exam.
- Attendance matters! Students with poor attendance typically receive the lowest grades from the peer evaluation. If you think you will miss two or more classes, please drop the course.
Books for Book Report. Pick a book you would really like to read, either because it might help you in your chosen career, or because it interests you. A very wide range of books are suitable for this assignment. Here are a few examples. Many, many more are possible. It would be a good idea to spend an hour examining the library’s selection. Any book not available in the library can be purchased online.

Books on Planning, the Built Environment, and Urban Design.


Books on the History of a Specific Place.


Books on the Political Economy of Places.

Wright, Gavin. 1986. *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War.*

Books with General Theoretical Insights into Local Economies.


Books Providing a Glimpse into Economic Life in a Past Local Economy.

Twain, Mark. 1884. *Life on the Mississippi.*

Books Analyzing Local Economies to Guide Real Estate Investment.

Guidelines for Term Paper: You should keep in mind several important considerations as you write.

1) The topic should have something to do with the spatial aspect of economic activity. Perhaps the easiest way to ensure this is to center the discussion on a sub-national region (such as a city); another way is to discuss why certain economic activities occur in a certain location or how they differ in one location from activities in another location.

2) Any material quoted, paraphrased, or ultimately derived from another author must be referenced. I prefer the following format: (author, date: page number). I expect about 10 references, and at least two should be journal articles. Paraphrasing is plagiarism, and must be avoided at all costs.

3) A good paper is accurate, interesting, and easy to read.

Term Paper Topics: This list of potential topics is suggestive, not exhaustive:

1) The nursery business (the winery business) in middle Tennessee.
2) The spatial distribution of auto manufacturing.
3) Hub economies—their spatial effects.
4) Overbuilding in commercial real estate: cause and effect.
5) Campus neighborhoods—MTSU versus Vanderbilt. Why different?
6) The underclass in Tennessee: urban and rural.
7) Regions facing environmental collapse (e.g. the Aral Sea).
8) The Kurdish- (Somali-, Mexican- etc.) Americans of Nashville: location and elements of community.
9) Urban renewal: good idea or bad?
10) The rise and decline of Detroit (Camden, Gary, Schenectady, etc.).
11) Where retirees like to live: how retirement stimulates some local economies.
12) Technological spin-offs from universities to local economies.
13) Old industrial regions in Europe (the U.S.).
14) The U.S.-Mexican (German-Polish, Polish-Belarus, etc.) border.
15) The influence of changes in transportation on urban structure.
16) The influence of changes in energy sources and energy prices on location patterns.
17) Planned communities (e.g., Brazilia): good idea or bad?
18) The Scotch-Irish and the American frontier.
20) The rise and fall of the Natchez Trace.
21) Land banks and development rights—market solutions to loss of greenspace.
22) The impact of the global economy on middle Tennessee.
23) The new urbanism: Seaside, Florida; Celebration, Florida; etc. (pick one).
24) Real estate investment opportunities: picking cities, picking neighborhoods.
25) Stadiums, arenas, and convention centers: who benefits?
26) Drug wars and their effect (on central cities, on the rural US, on rural Colombia, etc.).
27) Comparing City Structure: North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East (pick any two).
28) Impact fees: a good idea?
29) Current trends in urban planning.
30) The decline of the streetcar era in American cities: causes and consequences.
31) The spatial aspect of the electric power (cable television, telephone, water, sewerage, etc.) industry (pick one).
32) City structure in Medieval Italy, Renaissance Germany, Ancient Mesopotamia, Ancient Mesoamerica, etc. (pick one).
34) Retail shopping destinations (e.g., Pigeon Forge, Boaz, Opry Mill)—how they started, and prospects for continued success.
35) The spatial structure of the returned goods industry.
36) The effects of subprime mortgages (both their availability and the eventual crisis) on residential neighborhoods.
37) The spatial structure of the software industry (call centers, other services).
38) The spatial structure of tourism (eco-tourism, sex tourism, time-share resort tourism, cruise tourism, backpacker tourism, etc.). (pick one).
39) The economy of Cannon County (Dyer County, Maury County, etc.—pick one).
40) The “resource curse” in an oil-rich region (a county or cluster of counties in North Dakota, Wyoming, etc.).
41) Section 8 housing—good intentions and unintended consequences.
The peer evaluation, filled out at the end of the last class (May 2), will look like this.

Your name:____________________________________________ Please rank yourself and your fellow students. Ranks run from 1 to 16: 1 would be the appropriate rank for the student that helped you learn the most in this class; 16 would be appropriate for the student whose presentations, assistance as group member, or discussion were least helpful. No ties are allowed. Please also put a letter grade next to the rank (pluses and minuses allowed). For details on the methodology, please refer to http://www.economics-finance.org/jefe/econ/Effpaper.pdf.

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<td>Maria Esquivel</td>
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