

ECON 4331W
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Fall 2009
Writing Assignment

T.A.: Amanda Michaud

Office: Hanson 3-161

E-mail: micha292@umn.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 4:30 or by appointment

Please contact Amanda by e-mail for help with your questions. If you need to meet her, please email her to set up an appointment.

Assignment Objective:

The objective of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to:

1. Apply analytical skills and economic concepts to examine an interesting economic development issue.
2. Learn how to write a formal report underpinned by economic logic and evidence.

Expectations for the Assignment:

- Your report should include the economic analysis of a “development issue”, and your own insight into the factors involved. Survey or descriptive papers (reporting other people’s work/ideas on issues) or hypothetical scenarios are not acceptable.
- Your final report must be typed, double spaced, and between 10 to 15 pages. The assignment is in four parts; each assignment must be turned in on the date indicated; and each will be graded separately. Your target audience for the report is educated college graduates.
- You are expected to present a summary of your paper in class.
- *With each assignment you must include all previous graded assignments. Failure to do so will delay grading and lower your grade by 10 points.*
- *All assignments are to be turned in on the due dates at the beginning of class.* Those turned in later by the end of the day will receive a penalty of 10 points; those turned in the following day will receive a penalty of 20 points. No assignments will be accepted after that.
- If you have any problem understanding what is expected from you or how to go about completing this assignment successfully, please contact the instructor or T.A.

Assignment Format:

The assignment is in four parts, each nesting the preceding one:

- 1 Topic
- 2 Outline
- 3 First Draft
- 4 Final Version
- 5 Presentation

1. TOPIC of the report (due 5:15 p.m., Thursday, September 24, 2009)

- You must submit a one-page paper carefully explaining the chosen topic. Explain why you selected the development issue and the set of countries you intend to analyze.
- Please start by writing a **thesis statement – (one sentence (bold type) describing clearly the question or topic you want to analyze)**. The thesis statement (to be given in the introduction) should convey your main idea to the reader.
- Some helpful suggestions on thesis statements can be found on the websites below:

Definition and examples of thesis statements (St. Cloud State University):
<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/thesistatement.html>

How to write a thesis statement (Indiana University):
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml

A website that helps you develop a thesis statement:
<http://www.ozline.com/electraguide/thesis.html>

Developing a thesis statement (University of Wisconsin)
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/thesis_complete.html

Thesis Statements (University of North Carolina)
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/thesis.html>

◆ In this assignment, you should try to answer the following questions:

- 1 What is the development issue/problem that I am trying to analyze? (analyze, not examine or discuss)
- 2 Why is the question interesting? What is the empirical motivation?
- 3 Is data available? Is it from a reliable source?

• Be careful that your project is not too general/ambitious. Please narrow the topic to some specific aspect of a more general question. Remember that well-defined topics are easier to complete successfully. Make sure the thesis statement is precise and specific.

• You MUST turn in this assignment on the due date – or your Outline (next assignment) will not be accepted.

2. OUTLINE of the report (due 5:15 p.m., Thursday, October 15, 2009)

This has two parts, (A) and (B).

You must submit a 2-3 page paper giving a clear outline of your project. It should contain:

- A title page that includes: title of the report, your name, I.D. number, and date.
- A clear introduction describing the development issue you chose and the way you have decided to analyze it. Remember that your thesis statement should be included in your introduction and it should answer the question: what am I trying to prove/show?
- A summary of your essential ideas or arguments. Try to limit yourself to 3 main points. You could report the effects of the development issue on different countries and agents. Feel free to make subsections where needed.
- Try to base your arguments on theoretical analysis.
- A conclusion in which you restate the thesis, summarize the main points you developed and present the results you drew from your analysis.
- A bibliography where you list the references and data used. You may add an appendix for graphs, data, or mathematical derivations.
- Please include your previous assignment (the TOPIC).

OUTLINE - PART (B)

For this assignment, each student is required to read and summarize one academic economic publication. The objective of this reading is for you to become familiar with the structure and format of writing in Economics.

- Each student must submit the complete reference of the article read, and its brief summary on a separate page.
- Do not quote the abstract!! Failure to do so will result in 10 points taken off the grade of the Outline.
- Please use one of these academic economic publications: Journal of Political Economy, American Economic Review, Journal of Economic Theory, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Monetary Economics, and Journal of Economic Development. None other is acceptable.
- Other publications including "The Economist", "The Wall Street Journal", magazines, and newspapers do not qualify.
- Remember to submit the reference of the article and its summary, and not the article itself.

3. FIRST DRAFT (due 5:15 p.m., Thursday, November 5, 2009)

- You should submit a 10-15 page version of your paper containing all your main ideas/points. If your first draft is good, you will only have to make minor revisions before turning it in as your final report and will not need to include new material.
- The first draft should contain the same elements as the outline, but each main idea/point or effect should be fully developed and articulated.
- Your paper should be coherent and your logic should be transparent. Particular emphasis should be put on the way you develop your analysis on the impact of economic development on different groups within the relevant economies such as consumers, producers, workers, and others.
- You need to provide a complete list of references in your bibliography. Include only the sources you actually used in your paper and make sure your sources are credible.
- Please remember to include your two previous graded assignments (the TOPIC and OUTLINE).

4. FINAL REPORT (written and electronic) (due 5:15 p.m., Thursday, December 10, 2007.)

- ◆ Written submission: You should submit a final, polished version of your paper, taking into account the comments made on previous assignments. You should not need to add new material at this stage; although you are allowed to if you have discovered elements that would substantially alter the logic or the conclusions of your paper. You will be asked to submit a few statements telling us the changes you made in the paper based on the TA's (and instructor's) comments and suggestions on your first draft.

Turn in all parts of the assignment - please staple everything (topic, outline, first draft, and final draft) together, with the final report on top.

- ◆ Electronic submission: You also need to submit a copy of the final report to me via e-mail. This should definitely include the main body of the paper and bibliography; it need not include appendices, graphs, tables, or data. Acceptable formats include MS-Word, .pdf, and Word Perfect. You should email me the report before class on December 10, 2009. I will not accept any electronic submission after 5:00 p.m. on that day. My email address is: afogli@umn.edu

Remember to keep one copy of the final paper for your records.

5. PRESENTATIONS (November 5, 12, 19 and December 3 and 10, 2009)

All students will present a five-minute summary of their paper in class, focusing on the main ideas. This will also count toward your grade on the report. Feel free to write up a one-page abstract and read it out.

Assignment Details:

CHOOSING A TOPIC (EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE TOPICS)

- Here are some examples of good topics:
- Growth convergence or divergence in income per capita across particular groups of nations
- Growth and inequality in particular groups of nations
- The analysis of different models of growth/development with respect to specific country data
- The impact of fiscal/monetary policies on economic growth/development
- Effect of demographic changes on economic growth with respect to specific country data
- Effect of institutional changes on economic growth with respect to specific country data
- Make sure your topic is related to a focused question on economic growth and development. Please make sure you can obtain at least 15-20 years of data for the countries and issues involved.
- Below are examples of “UNACCEPTABLE” topics because they are either vague, not related to development, or too broad:
 - Asian Financial Crises
 - China/Russia and WTO
 - Hyperinflation
 - Dollarization
 - Trade in Coffee between US and Columbia.
 - Any hypothetical scenario or a “development survey”
 - Please do not pick illegal goods or countries which do not have reliable data.

NO SURVEY OF DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNTRY IS ACCEPTABLE. YOU MUST EXAMINE A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE AND GIVE YOUR OWN ANALYSIS. MAKE SURE YOU PICK A TOPIC WHERE YOU CAN COLLECT AT LEAST 15-20 YEARS OF DATA.

WRITING TECHNIQUES

The following are some common problems of students' reports:

- The paper lacks focus and is not well organized. A major reason why this happens is that students cannot decide on THE most important message that they want the readers to get from the report. This leads to the importance of a thesis statement – make sure it is included in the introduction.
- There are not enough analyses and explanations in the report. Many times students state some ideas or conjectures without explaining step by step the logic behind these. Please guide the readers through your arguments carefully to make sure that they understand the arguments.
- The use of quotations to substitute for the explanations. A common mistake students make in their reports is that they use quotations from textbooks or articles AS the arguments. It is acceptable for students to use some ideas suggested by others, yet students should try to explain the ideas in their own words and should not simply copy the quotations without their own explanations. The total number of quotations in a paper should be limited; they should be used to highlight a particular idea or show its importance.
- A lot of grammatical and spelling errors in the report. To avoid these errors, students should ask someone who is good in composition to proofread their reports. Students should also use the many writing services available on campus to get advice on correct grammar usage.
- Confusing cause with effect. Another common mistake is not recognizing that an apparent cause of something might instead be an effect of that something. You should give evidence of the cause or effect or acknowledge that the evidence of causality here is not clear.

We suggest you use these techniques:

- 1 The use of graphs, tables and charts. Whenever possible, try to use these to summarize the statistics used in the report, and try to use graphs to summarize some of the economic arguments used (e.g. shift in supply and demand, effect of government policies on trade, etc.).
- 2 The use of footnotes. There may be some arguments that are interesting and yet do not fit into the report very well; a possible strategy is to present these arguments in a footnote.
- 3 A good "Introduction" and a good "Conclusion". A good "Introduction" can compel the readers to continue reading the report with enthusiasm. Students should try to state clearly and precisely the issue that is addressed in the report, explain why the issue is interesting and/or important to the readers, and give the readers some hints about the major conclusion that is obtained in the report. A good "Conclusion" should remind the readers of THE most important message of the report and why it is interesting and/or important to the readers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- You should use various resources and cite them properly.
- You can use academic journals, popular newspapers (e.g., Wall Street Journal), magazines (Economist, etc.), and/or reports from various institutions.
- You can use tables, graphs, or maps to present information.
- Please make sure you have a mix of internet and other sources; make sure the sources are well-reputed and credible; that is, do not chose all references from news magazines or obscure internet sources. If unsure about the credibility of your references, please contact Kate.
- Please provide appropriate references where needed in the paper.
- You can check here for tips on citing:
<http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/infomachine.asp?moduleID=10&lessonID=74>

GRADING CRITERIA

- Each part of the assignment (Outline, First Draft, and Final Report) will receive an individual grade (Denoted by G1, G2, and G3, respectively).
- Your grade for the written part of the assignment is given by the formula:

$$G=G1 \times 0.2 + G2 \times 0.3 + G3 \times 0.5$$

In other words, the Final Report counts for 50 %, the First draft for 30 %, and the Outline for 20%. This G grade is 95 % of the grade of the assignment, with 5 % being for the oral presentation.

Grading of all parts of the assignment - the Outline, First Draft, and Final Report - will be based on:

- 1 The level of analytical skill and intuition demonstrated in the report (e.g. whether you can analyze the issue critically, whether you can argue logically, originality of your ideas, etc.); - (70% of the grade) AND
- 2 The presentation of the report (e.g. how well you explain difficult concepts and arguments, the coherence and clarity of the presentation, the amount of spelling and grammatical errors, etc.) - (30% of the grade) AN

Note that this Writing Assignment (including the Oral Presentation) counts for 30% of your grade in the Econ 4331W course.

References:

- 1 "So You Have To Write an Economics Term Paper..." by L. Officer, D. Saks, and J. Saks.
 - 2 "The Elements of Style" by W. Strunk Jr. and E. B. White.
 - 3 "The Writer's Guide to College Economics" by T. L. Wyrich.
 - 4 "Economical Writing" by Deirdre McCloskey.
- Sources for economics journals: Wilson library.
 - Publications by the Federal Reserve Bank's economists: <http://www.minneapolisfed.org>.
 - ♦ Data sources:
 - <http://www.helsinki.fi/WebEc> (Click on Economics Data and go on from there)
 - Penn World Table: http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt_index.

Scholastic Dishonesty:

- Students must work on their reports individually. They are encouraged to discuss, exchange and coordinate ideas, but each of them will turn in and is responsible for an individual report.
- The College of Liberal Arts defines scholastic dishonesty as "any act that violates the right of another student with respect to academic work or that involves misrepresentation of a student's own academic work. Scholastic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or exams; plagiarizing (misrepresenting as one's own anything done by another); submitting the same or substantially similar papers for more than one course without the consent of all instructors concerned; depriving another of necessary course materials; or sabotaging another's work."
- Students who commit any form of the scholastic dishonesty described above will receive a grade "F" for their Writing Assignment.
- **PLAGIARISM:** This involves passing off anyone else's work as your own, and includes copying a whole paper or parts of it and claiming it as your own work. It also includes turning in your own same or essentially similar paper for two or more courses. The University has very strict rules concerning plagiarism. If you use any other person's work, words, or ideas, please cite and acknowledge the sources. Note that the University has purchased a program that allows professors to check if any student paper, essay, or research paper has been copied or paraphrased from the Internet. I will use this program (Turnitin.com) to check for plagiarism.

Please check the following website for more details on plagiarism.
<http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/>

CHECK LIST:

- Remember to submit the summary and complete reference of the academic publication you read with the second assignment (Outline) (Penalty: 10 points).
- Remember to attach all previous assignments with each new assignment submitted. (Penalty: 10 points each time)
- Remember to turn in your assignment on time. No assignments will be accepted after the second day. (Penalty: 10 points per day up to a maximum of 20 points per assignment). There will be no exception to this rule.
- Turn in the Final Report definitely by the due date – absolutely no acceptance of late submissions. Remember to turn in written and electronic versions of your Final Report by 5:00 p.m. on December 10, 2009.

