

AECN 896A
Community and Regional Economic Analysis
3 Credit Hours
Spring 2009

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Meeting Time: This is a 13-week distance education graduate course running from January 19th through April 24, 2009 (the week of March 15-22 will be spring break).

Lectures for the weekly topics will be posted on Blackboard no later than Monday noon of each week by 12:00 noon CST.

Course Description:

A firm grounding in the reality of the local/regional economy is necessary for successful programs in community economic development and for designing effective local and regional policy and programming in economic development. This course provides an economic basis of understanding by introducing concepts of: communities and regions, theories of economic growth and change, drivers of economic growth and decline, economic base measures, roles of local government and public sector processes, analytical tools for assessment, and basic strategies for local/regional economic development.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand contemporary economic development issues and challenges
2. Identify and explain principles and concepts from the fields of economics and sociology, which affect the viability of communities and their evolution over time.
3. Be able to identify, access, and organize critical background information and data necessary for understanding a community or regional economy and its potential.
4. Understand and be able to apply theoretical concepts and analytical tools for assessing economic development opportunities/strategies for a community or region.
5. Articulate a vision for “sustainable communities” in a holistic perspective with practical implications.

Course Focus:

In making the course as relevant and applied as possible, each student should see him/herself as an economic development professional who is working for a specific special community or region (some of you are actually in those roles at the present time, or will soon be). In that context, you will use that community/region of place as your *community of focus* throughout the course. In so doing, the assignments and applications to real-world issues will be identified with that specific geographic economy. By the end of the course, you will have constructed a file of materials and analysis from which findings and recommendations could be officially presented to the leadership of that community for their consideration. In other words, the efforts you put forth in this class are far more than just completing the course and receiving a favorable grade; the effort should also result in a tangible professional contribution to your *community of focus*.

Duty of Professor:

The role of the professor in the course is as follows:
“To provide an environment for learning in which each student has the opportunity and encouragement to reach their maximum potential.”

This is carried out in a pedagogy of **student-active** learning in which five fundamental elements exist:

- **Respect:** Mutual respect and attentiveness to specific experiences, gifting, and challenges of others.
- **Reasoning:** Fostering higher-order problem-solving and critical/creative thinking skills, with professional-level articulation of that thinking in both oral and written forms.
- **Relevance:** Connecting the learning process with the passion that lies within each student.
- **Real-World Application:** Using concepts within an actual context, moving towards practical resolution of a specific issue.
- **Recognition:** Positive recognition and celebration of quality effort and outcomes.

Required Text:

- Community Economics: Linking Theory and Practice, 2nd Edition, Ron Shaffer, Steve Deller, and Dave Marcoviller, Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Items to download from Internet:

- Community Economic Analysis: A How to Manual
<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/pubs/contents/rrd186-readonly.pdf>
- Other readings will be assigned.

Required Technology:

Minimum Browser Configuration: Internet Explorer 6.0 or Netscape Navigator 6. Microsoft Office: specifically Microsoft Word and Power Point. Adobe Acrobat or Reader (can be downloaded free at <http://www.adobe.com/>). 1 GHz processor, 20 GB Hard Drive, 256 Megabytes of RAM, and 56K modem at a minimum, cable modem or high speed connection preferred (firewall-free). Sound card and speakers.

Class participation:

Because this is an online course, face-to-face meetings for the most part will be rare if not nonexistent. Nonetheless, an informal, interactive approach will still be used as much as possible through the use of discussion boards. All students along with the professor are required to participate and contribute in all discussion board questions and postings. This interaction will also tend to simulate the decision-making environment, where you can test your thinking against that of others.

It is critical that all discussion board postings meet the following 3 criteria and grading will also be based on these criteria:

1. No greater than 3 paragraphs in length
2. Must use proper grammar and English (no misspellings, grammatical errors, etc.)
3. Postings must incite a new idea, insight, or position to the content OR defend an existing idea, thought, or position (simply summarizing others postings or repeating information is not sufficient – you need to add to the ongoing dialogue.)

(NOTE: All are encouraged to make multiple postings each week.)

Course Procedure:

The course is comprised of 13 modules. The pace is one module per week as set by the schedule, and is to be completed in order. Within each module students are expected to:

1. Read assigned materials.
2. Down-load lecture notes.
3. View/listen to the lecture presentation.
4. Discussion questions are completed on your own and are to make yourself more familiar with course concepts.
5. Contribute and participate in discussion board postings.
6. Complete required assignments and/or self-study exercises.

Course Organization:

Assigned reading materials, lecture notes, lecture presentations, and any assignments and self-study exercises are all found under their respective module number, under the modules tab. The lecture notes and narrated lecture power point slides can also be found under the course documents tab. Discussion board postings will be opened with each module, under the discussion board tab. In addition, a discussion board for general questions will also be open for each module; by doing this students can see the questions already asked by other students, and while the answers will be provided by the professor, students are encouraged to answer each others questions as well. Any specific question related to an individual topic or assignment, or any question that the student does not wish to be seen by other students can be either posted anonymously or be emailed to the professor. The professor will try to answer all questions within 24 hours, if not sooner. A list of community development websites useful to self-study exercises, discussion questions, work on your community of focus, and personal interest is found under the websites tab. These websites are not state or region specific, that way you will learn how to track down data for your specific community or region. Any additional materials or resources provided can be found under course documents.

Note: If you have a slow internet connection, or are unable to download lectures or other documents in a timely manner, contact the professor and we will send a CD with all of the course materials directly to you.

Performance Measures:

The grading for the course will be based on both individual work and community work.

Individual Work (75% of grade):

Assignments 50%

Individual Projects 25%

Community Work (25% of grade):

Discussion Board
participation/contribution 15%

Group Projects 10%

Letter grades are assigned along the following scale: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=below 60. Plus and minus grades will not be assigned in this course.

Graded Activities:**Self Study Exercises and Assignments:**

These are designed for the student to understand and then apply material from the modules to real-life and personal scenarios. These exercises are required for most modules. They will be due no later than midnight Sunday at the end of the module week. Please submit the exercises electronically either through emailing the professor, or using the digital

drop box. Be sure to label each email/assignment specifically to avoid confusion (for example, 'John Smith Self-Study Exercise #1').

Course Engagement and Contribution:

Students are also expected to participate in answering other students' questions in the questions discussion boards. Finally, your discussion board postings are expected fairly early in the week (students should begin dialogues and discussions no later than Tuesday or Wednesday) so that ample time is available for discussion/interaction.

Participation in this course is expected to be at a professional level in all aspects. Tasks, duties, and responsibilities are to be approached in a professional manner—being accountable for one's role in this educational experience, respecting the other members of this community-of-interest, and striving to contribute positively to the good of the whole. Quality work, conscientious and timely effort, and meaningful engagement with one another is to be our norm. As community development (CD) professionals seeking to improve our communities of place, we should strive for nothing less.

As facilitator, I will try hard to keep the activities of the course directed towards relevance and application. The perennial under-lying question in virtually all efforts should be, *so what?* In other words, each of us must honestly ask, how can this component strengthen my professional skills as a CD professional and/or contribute to the future success of our communities? Granted, there will likely be times when the apparent relevancy and application of an assignment or project is much more indirect than direct. But, hopefully we will be able to travel through some key theories and economic concepts and really see, in the end, their practical value in better understanding the economic world of communities and the means to improve their futures. By the way, I see this course as a shared experience with all of you; and I will gladly receive your suggestions for improvement as we go along.

The time commitment for this course, I'm sure, is of some concern. We will expect students to allocate the time blocks each week to stay with the flow. I would suggest at least five to six hours per week would need to be spent in this learning experience. Some of the modules will take more time than others; so we would ask you to be flexible and, at times, invest even more of your time in it. However, I am fully aware of the fact that we all "have a life" beyond this course; and so we'll try to pace it at a challenging but reasonable fashion.

Individual Research Project:

Application of theory, concepts, and tools of analysis is a vital component of this learning experience. Consequently, 25% of the overall grade is based on the individual research project focusing on your specific community of focus.

We encourage you to begin working on this requirement right away. As a first step, you will be expected to interact with community people (officials, leaders, and citizens) asking them this question: “How can I, as a graduate student intern, make a contribution to this community by carrying out a specific research assignment?” In other words, we want you to enter into some depth dialogue with the stakeholders and, with their input, develop a relevant and “doable” research assignment. The focus should be an economically related issue, which is sufficiently broad enough to accommodate a wide range of possible specific project ideas. It should also build on and incorporate the file of information and specific analysis assignments you will be doing over the coming weeks as part of most of the modules. We hope you will initiate this dialogue within the first few weeks of the course.

By the fourth module, (the week of Feb 9-13) we will want you to submit a draft of your research proposal. This should include: 1) a brief statement of the problem situation or focus issue; 2) your research objectives; 3) the proposed research method and analysis; and 4) the expected implication(s) of your findings for the betterment of the community. Obviously, many of the concepts and analytical tools presented in the course will not be fully addressed by the fourth week; however, you still should be able to anticipate appropriate research approaches to the topic at hand.

Through a series of bi-weekly progress reports and feedback iterations, we will “stay-to-task” and complete the project on time. Further details and feedback will be provided as these come due. The final report is to be a professional-quality document (or documents including power-point presentations, etc.) that will be presented to the community leadership for consideration. More details will follow.

A Comment on Plagiarism:

Mark Twain said, “*always tell the truth; then you don’t need to worry about your memory.*” Good words for today in this age of information explosion. Quite honestly, few of us will ever come up with truly original ideas and thoughts; and if we do, it won’t be very often. So it makes total sense to always be forthright and provide clear and complete citations and referencing of the information we compile. And direct quotes should be just that. Besides, good documentation provides others, as well as ourselves, the opportunity to explore topics further in a more systematic fashion.

American with Disabilities Act:

Any student who may require an accommodation under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the course instructor in this matter as soon as possible and no later than the end of the first week of classes.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is a public university committed to providing a quality education to a diverse student body. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln not to discriminate based on gender, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran’s status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. This policy is applicable to all University administered programs including educational programs, financial aid, admission policies and employment policies.

This policy is enacted in accordance with University of Nebraska Regent’s policy and with various federal and state discrimination laws including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Inquiries regarding discrimination issues may be directed to the Office of Equity, Access, and Diversity Programs, 128 Canfield Administration Building (402) 472-3417. You may also contact entities such as the Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission and the Department of Education, Civil Rights Division.

Course Schedule and Readings

Module #1

January 19-23 Defining Community and Community Economic Development

Readings: SDM Ch. 1 pp 1-8 and Ch. 12 pp. 202-205

Topics:

- What is Community?
- Demographic Definitions/Classification
- Economic Development vs. Economic Growth
- Components of Community Economic Development

Self-Study Exercise

Module #2

January 26-30 Economic Fundamentals in Development

Readings: SDM Ch. 1 pp. 8-19

- Rethinking Federal Policy for Regional Economic Development by Mark Drabenstott at Kansas City Federal Reserve’s website:

<http://www.kansascityfed.org/Publicat/ECONREV/PDF/1q06drab.pdf>

Topics:

- Market Efficiency and Social Optimality
- Supply and Economies of Size and Scale
- Agglomeration Economies
- Economic Threshold Points
- Market Success and Market Failures

Self-Study Exercise

Module #3

Feb. 2-6

Economic Growth Theories and Concepts

Readings: SDM Ch. 2

Topics:

- Stages of Economic Growth
- Income Distribution Growth Aspects
- Economic Growth Theories
- Role of Technology
- Role of Government/Policy

Self-Study Exercise

Module #4

Feb 9-13

Technology, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Financial Capital Markets

Reading: SDM Chs 7 and 8

Topics:

- Market Disruptiveness of Technology and Innovation
- Community/Regional Attributes for Innovation
- Role of Financial Capital

Self-Study Exercise

Draft of Individual Research Proposal Due**Module #5**

Feb. 16-20

Community Market Concept and Export Base Theory

Readings: SDM, Ch. 4 pp. 59-66

Materials to be posted

Topics:

- Circular Economic Flow
- Export Base Industry
- Economic Multipliers

Self-Study Exercise

Module #6

Feb. 22-27

Internal Community Markets and Central Place Theory

Readings: SDM, Ch. 4 pp. 66-78

Materials to be posted

Topics:

- Range of Goods and Services
- Economic Thresholds
- Clusters: Compatible, Complementary, Comparison

Self-Study Exercise

Module #7

Mar. 2-6

Labor Market Dynamics

Readings: SDM Ch. 6

Topics:

- Labor Market Defined

- Human Capital Theory
- Community-based Labor Market Issues

Self-Study Exercise

Module #8

Mar. 9-13

Spacial and Locational Economics

Readings: SDM Ch. 3

Topics:

- Basic Location Theories/Concepts
- Agglomeration/Cluster Aspects
- Regional verses Local Comparative Advantage

Self-Study Exercise

Module #9

Mar. 23-27

Public Infrastructure, Goods and Services

Readings: SDM Chs 9 and 10

Topics:

- Non Market Good and Services
- Implications for an Amenity Era
- Efficiency and Effectiveness in Government
- Government Revenues and Taxation

Self-Study Exercise

Module #10

Mar 30–Apr 3

Descriptive Tools of Community Economic Analysis

Readings: SDM Ch. 4

Topics:

- Trade Area Analysis
- Relative Configuration of Local/Regional Economies

Self-Study Exercise

Module #11

Ap. 6-10

Economic Impact Analysis

Readings: SDM Ch. 15

Topics:

- Input-Output Analysis
- Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) Analysis
- IMPLAN Model

Self-Study Exercise

Module #12

Apr. 13-17

Building Sustainable Communities: A Systems Perspective

Readings: TBA

Topics:

- Attributes of Sustainability
- Moving toward Sustainability using Systems Thinking

Self-Study Exercise

Module #13

Apr 20-24

Looking to the Future

Readings: SDM Ch. 17

Topics:

- Community Economics in Bridging Discipline
- Multiple Perspectives of CD
- Comprehensive Theory – “A Work in Progress”

Self-Study Exercise