EC295.01

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY
AND POLITICAL ECONOMY SEMINAR

Syllabus

Spring 2011

Meetings:
This seminar meets on Mondays, 4:00-5:30pm, Higgins Hall, Room 225, unless otherwise noted in the schedule.

There is an introductory meeting on the first Monday of the semester. After that, the seminar meets only when there are scheduled presentations.

The updated schedule is available at http://fmwww.bc.edu/EC-j/SemS2011/EC.ILA.S2011.php

Organizer:

Fabio Ghironi

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 3:30 – 5:30 pm, and by appointment

Welcome

Feel free to address me as Fabio. You can of course address me as Professor Ghironi if you prefer to do so. You can find out a lot about me by visiting my web site.

Seminar Objectives and Description

This interdisciplinary seminar series focuses on topics of relevance for current economic policymaking, including analysis of political and strategic dimensions. The series features speakers from the academic world with experience in policymaking and/or a record of policy-relevant research as well as speakers from policy institutions. The seminars will focus on the substantive insights that the speakers will offer on present-day policy questions rather than technique. The target audience includes undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty in economics, political science, international studies, finance, and history.

You can access information on the seminar speakers by clicking on their names in the seminar’s web page. The papers they will present (and/or other background material) will also be accessible
from that page by clicking on the titles of the presentations.  (Note that, in most cases, speakers will send me title and material only few days before their presentations.)

Seminar Assistant

Isabella Blengini (blengini@bc.edu) will assist me in the organization of the seminar this semester. Once I have heard from the speakers on their arrival and departure times and organized the outline of their schedules, you will receive an e-mail from me some days before each seminar to schedule meetings, lunches, and dinners (see “Requirements” below), and you will be asked to send your reply to Isabella. Make sure there is room for messages in your inbox, and check your e-mail regularly during the semester.

Requirements

1. Attendance: Students who are taking this seminar course for credit are not allowed to miss more than one seminar presentation. (This requirement applies to presentations scheduled at the regular course time of Monday, 4:00-5:30 pm. There will be no consequence if conflicts in your schedule cause you to miss presentations scheduled at other times.)

2. Reading: Whenever possible, the paper or other material on which each presentation will be based will be posted online in the seminar’s web page at least some days before the seminar. You must read these materials in advance to be able to follow the presentations and contribute to the discussions with comments and questions.

3. Summaries: Students taking this seminar course for credit are required to write summaries of no more than 600 words of each (Monday) seminar presentation and associated discussion. Each summary must be concluded with a question that you would have liked to add to the discussion. Summaries must be typed as Word documents and e-mailed to Isabella by 5:00 pm on the third day following each seminar. Important 1: It will not be acceptable to submit summaries that are simply copied from the abstracts or introductions of the papers on which the presentations are based. These should really be your summaries of the presentations and discussions. Important 2: You are not required to write summaries for presentations that are scheduled at times other than the regular course time – although it would be a good exercise for you to do it. Important 3: If you missed a Monday presentation, you are still required to write a summary of the reading material available from the seminar’s web page.

4. Meetings with speakers: Depending on speakers’ availability, I will schedule half-hour appointments for them to meet with students (undergraduate and graduate) and faculty on seminar days, as well as post-seminar, small-group discussions. I will reserve some of these meeting slots (and some seats in the post-seminar gatherings) for students who are taking the seminar for credit (whenever possible, at least one slot in the afternoon and one in the morning). These meetings will be arranged so that the speaker will meet with a small number of students, who will have the possibility of asking him/her questions on the topic of his/her presentation (or related topics). Students taking the seminar for credit must have participated in at least one such meeting (or post-seminar discussion) by the end of the semester.

5. Lunch or dinner with speakers: Again depending on speakers’ availability, there will be lunch and dinner with speakers on seminar days. Faculty and students (undergraduate and graduate) will join these lunches and dinners (covered by the seminar budget). I will reserve some space at these occasions for students who are taking the seminar for credit. These students must have participated in at least one lunch or dinner by the end of the semester.
Note 1: Obviously, your ability to fulfill requirements 4 and 5 will depend on the availability of speakers to spend time at Boston College in addition to the seminar presentation and the actual number of seminars that we will have (cancellation is always a risk with high-profile speakers). I will keep this in mind at the end of the semester, but it is in your interest not to procrastinate fulfilling these requirements when you have the opportunity.

Note 2: When you ask to be put on a speaker’s schedule for a meeting, lunch, the post-seminar discussion group, or dinner, make that a binding commitment. You should not cancel your participation in the speaker’s schedule unless it is for a real emergency.

Note 3: There is no exam for this course. We may use the final exam’s time slot for a “Conclusions” session in which we brainstorm on questions left open by the presentations, but we will determine that later.

Some Other Information

As you will see, the number of seminar presentations is smaller than the number of weeks in the semester, and some of them are not scheduled at the regular course time. The seminar budget constrains the number of speakers that I could invite, and their availability constrains my ability to schedule them at the regular time. Also, last-minute cancellation is always a risk with high-profile speakers who are actively engaged in policymaking and/or advising. Unfortunately, when this happens, it is usually impossible to replace speakers on short notice, as the schedules of virtually all research- and policy-active scholars (including your professors at Boston College) fill months in advance.

As noted above, we will have no meetings other than today and on scheduled presentation days (and, possibly, on final exam day). This seminar is not part of the menu of courses that I was expected to teach this year. The time I spend organizing it and participating in it is a pure donation, motivated by my goal to give Boston College students the opportunity to learn from and interact with top scholars who engage in policy-relevant research. Unfortunately, my other teaching, advising, research, and other professional commitments make it impossible for me to donate more than what you will receive.

Finally, this seminar series is funded by the Institute for the Liberal Arts, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.