Boston College
Department of Economics

EC884: Distributive Justice
Fall 2012

Instructor  Uzi Segal.

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Lectures  M 3:00–5:50, Maloney 480P. There will be no lectures on Sept. 17, Oct. 1, Oct. 15 and Oct. 22. We'll reschedule these classes during our first meeting.

Website  All problem sets, solutions, lecture notes, old exams, sites of relevant articles etc. will be loaded to the course site at WebCT.

Office Hours  Monday 2–3.

Exams  There will be a take home, open book exam which you’ll have 48 hours to solve. It should be typed and electronically submitted as a pdf file to the course website. The grade for the course will be your grade on this exam. By taking this class you agree not to discuss it with anyone else until after the submission deadline.

Homework  There will be occasional problem sets (about 5–6 during the term). I very strongly recommend solving them (although they will not be graded) as they will provide an excellent preparation for the exam. We will discuss some of the problems in class.

I will provide you with solutions to the problem sets. Please let me know if you find any mistakes in the notes or the solutions.

Lecture Notes  Every week, before class, I will distribute (electronically) the slides I intend to use during the lecture. Please print them and bring them to class. During the lecture you’ll be able to mark them according to the discussion in class.
Readings  A list will be loaded to the website. Obviously this list contains a lot more than you are expected to read. However, some of these reading are mandatory (about 1–2 papers per week). I will let you know every week what are the required readings for the next week.

Some Other Points

1. I very strongly encourage you to participate in the class discussion, express your opinion, and ask questions.
2. Please do not use computers in class. They are disruptive, and not very helpful as it is very hard to type math quickly. And you’ll get the slides anyway.
3. The best way to communicate with me (except of course for during the lectures or office hours) is by email. I tend to answer emails until 1 or even 2am. Emails sent on Friday afternoon will not be answered till Saturday night. I’ll be off-line from September 16 in the afternoon to September 18 in the evening, and similarly on September 25–26, September 30–October 2 and October 7–October 9. When you send me an email use your BC account and make sure that the subject is “884.”
4. Class Behavior: As said before, please don’t use a computer in class. Also, no food and of course no cell phones in class.

A Note on Academic Integrity  You are expected to observe the highest standards of academic integrity. Please review the standards and procedures at http://www.bc.edu/integrity. If you have any questions, please consult with me. Violations will be reported to the Deans’ Office and reviewed by the College’s Committee on Academic Integrity.

Course Outline  How should society allocate resources when markets cannot be used? We discussed this question (briefly) in EC741, and are going to expand on it in this course. Among other things, we will expand on the following topics:

1. Can we compare individual utilities?
2. If justice means equality, what is the meaning of being equal?
3. Is randomization a reasonable tool for justice?
4. Do procedures matter?
5. Ex post and ex ante analysis.
6. The bargaining problem (and is it relevant to justice?)