**Economics 311 – Intermediate Macroeconomics – Fall 2017**

**Dr. Claudio Paiva**

Lectures: TuTh 10:30 am – 11:45 am Final Exam: Thursday, Dec. 14, 8:00 am - 10:00 am

Office Hours: Tue 12 pm –1:30 pm; Thu 9 am – 10:15 am; and by appointment

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Course page: CI Learn - Blackboard

**Program Learning Goals (PLG)**

These are the skills we try to help you build in all MVS courses:

1. Critical Thinking

2. Oral Communication

3. Written Communication

4. Collaboration

5. Conduct (Ethics)

6. Competency in Discipline

**Course Description**

Determinants of levels of national income, employment, and price levels. Analysis of secular and cyclical changes in economic activity, and the effects of monetary and fiscal policies on these changes.

Pre-requisites: ECON 110; ECON 111; and MATH 140 or MATH 150

Textbook: Gordon – Macroeconomics 11th edition (ISBN 0321485513) or 12th edition (ISBN 0138014914)

**Course Learning Objectives**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Distinguish macroeconomic from microeconomic themes. (PLG: 1, 6)
2. Identify the components of national income and the various methods for computing national income. (PLG: 6)
3. Predict the effects of government policy changes on aggregate economic behavior. (PLG: all)
4. Describe the role of money in the economy and predict the effects of changes in the relative scarcity of money (PLG: 1, 2, 3, 6)
5. Identify the purpose and effects of fiscal and monetary policy. (PLG: all)
6. Analyze the domestic and international economic effects of domestic government policy changes. (PLG: all)

**My approach to designing and teaching this course**

This 3-unit course is taught at the high level necessary for you to understand key current economic issues and the impact that macroeconomic events and policies have on businesses and people everywhere. Federal regulations indicate that students in 3-unit courses like this one are expected to spend a minimum of 6 hours a week working on the course material outside the classroom.[[1]](#footnote-1) I design and teach this course according to this expectation. So do not wait a few months to complain that the course requires a lot of work: I am already letting you know on the first day.

The textbook is one of the most widely used macroeconomics textbooks in the country. If you do well in this course, I can assure you that your understanding of macroeconomics will be at par with that of successful undergraduate students anywhere. In addition to explaining macroeconomics, the course may substantially improve your ability to (1) collect, process, and interpret real data; (2) formulate hypotheses and support them with well-crafted arguments; (3) effectively communicate your views, including through the writing of professional-style reports and presentations.

The global economy is extremely competitive. Countries compete for investment, businesses compete for customers and resources, and people compete for jobs. Companies decide where they produce and whom they hire partially based on workers’ skills. Hundreds of millions of people in developing countries are becoming better trained and more educated every day, while we hear many stories about the decline of the US education system. Neither Trump nor the next president can “bring jobs back” to you – you must become more qualified than the other candidates from around the world. My general goal here is to do my part and teach you a course that is as good as any intermediate macroeconomics course taken by those who will compete with you for jobs. In order to succeed, I am also willing to provide extra help with any of the pre-requisite material needed to understand intermediate macroeconomics and the issues discussed in the news every day. So you can expect this course to require more work than you are accustomed to; it certainly requires a lot more work from me. But I believe it is the right thing to do. Lowering the standards would be easier for us, but would also leave you unprepared for the job market and erode the value of a CSUCI degree for all students – former and future.

I believe my main role as a professor is to help you think through the material in a way that will lead you to understand and form a critical view of these economic developments and policies. I will also review your writing skills and press you to adopt best practices used in top companies, financial institutions, and international organizations.

The textbook provides the foundation for the material taught in the course. However, my lectures and assignments will also make extensive use of “case studies” based on current and past economic, political, and social events as reported or discussed in reputable media outlets (the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, NBC, The Economist, CNN, etc.). These events may be discussed in class and/or provide context for exams and other assignments. This course has been designed to give you the basic tools to understand, analyze, and form a critical opinion about the main economic issues of our time. In many instances we will also discuss the links between economics, policies, politics, and social issues.

**How will you be graded?**

OPTION 1: EXAMS ONLY

First exam = 25% Second exam = 30% Final exam = 45%. The final will be cumulative.

OPTION 2: EXAMS, COUNTRY REPORTS, AND COUNTRY RESEARCH

First exam = 20% Second exam = 20% Final exam = 30%. The final will be cumulative.

Country research = 15% Four macroeconomic country reports = 15%

The final course grade is based on the percentage of total points earned throughout the semester calculated as the ratio of the weighted sum of all points earned to the weighted sum of all points possible. You should expect your grade to follow these guidelines:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A ≥ 90 |  B ≥ 80 | C ≥ 70 | D ≥ 60 | 60 > F |

**Which grading option should you choose?**

I strongly believe that the hands-on, data analysis and policy assessment work associated with the country reports and research in Option 2 (details below) are an excellent way to help you understand and evaluate economic policies. More importantly, this research activity can be a very valuable addition to your resume’ that may set you apart from other college graduates when you are applying for graduate school or a high-level job that requires critical thinking, logic reasoning, communication and analytical skills.

However, I also understand that different students have different preferences and priorities as well as different workloads outside this course. The country reports and research work expected here is of a high quality for university and professional standards – do not expect to put in the same effort you put in during high school or lower level courses and get a good grade. I am pretty sure you have never done this type of report before, and that is why I will work hard to teach you as long as you work as hard too (after all, university should be a place to learn new things). Especially if you cannot or will not spend 6 hours a week working on the course outside the classroom, do not go with Option 2.

If you decide for Option 2, you must send me an e-mail with the names of the students that will be in your group by Tuesday, September 5. If at any point in the semester a group member fails to adequately contribute to the group work, please come see me. I will change the groups to avoid someone being stuck with all the work while other group members get the same grade. Remember: I expect group work to be of better quality than individual work, not the same quality with less effort by each group member.

Let me emphasize that I want you to learn, and I will be glad to provide you with extra help if needed: please don't hesitate to drop by during office hours.

**What will the exams be like?**

The exams in this course are designed to challenge your ability to apply the tools of economics and analyze real world problems. Pure memorization will not get you very far. Many questions will require you to interpret “real world” data or recent news articles, identify economic problems and evaluate possible solutions using the theory and concepts covered in the course. Some math will be required.

You must bring a pink (large) scantron to all exams. The use of cellular phones, computers, tablets or I-pods is not allowed during exams. THE ONLY ELECTRONIC GADGET YOU MAY USE DURING EXAMS IS A SIMPLE ALGEBRA CALCULATOR. THERE WILL BE NO MAKE UP EXAMS.

**What is expected from my Country Research PowerPoint?**

Working in groups of 2 or 3 students, you will choose two countries to study during the semester.[[2]](#footnote-2) I expect you to read and collect data about these countries in order to complete 4 country reports due during the semester and prepare a Research PowerPoint due at the end of the semester.

The country reports will require that you apply the material discussed in class. They will be based on specific questions and instructions I post for each report as we move along the course material (more on this below).

Your Research PowerPoint should be a comparative study between the performances of the two countries in some of the following macroeconomic issues: economic growth, business cycles, inflation, unemployment, exchange rates, deficits and debt levels. We will define the particular issue(s) and the countries of study for each group during the first few weeks of the course. You should compare and assess the performances, evaluate their impact on the overall economy, analyze the reasons why they are different (or similar), and perhaps recommend the best policies to improve outcomes. Data analyses should support all these elements. Avoid including things we did not cover in class and that you read in other reports but cannot explain or connect to your hypothesis.

More details on and advice for the paper can be found in a PowerPoint presentation posted on CI Learn (Blackboard). Give special attention to the recommendation that you should (1) formulate a comparative hypothesis on which the entire Research PowerPoint should be based; (2) have a group “brain storming session” to prepare an outline, giving special attention to the data and arguments you will use to support your hypothesis; (3) come discuss your outline with me. Every semester I see some students ignoring my instructions, taking shortcuts, and then wondering why they earned a low grade on the research project.

We will define the research issue and the countries of study for each group during the first few weeks of class. You will not have to present your work in class. Your grade will be based on the PowerPoint you prepare. The PowerPoint should have no more than 10 slides.

I will grade your presentation looking for a skillful application of the analytical tools covered in the course as well as critical and original thinking. **The PowerPoint slides should be sent to me attached to an e-mail before 11:59 pm on December 10**. Your assignment will lose 20 points for each day that you are late.

Remember: gathering information and listing facts will not earn you many points (anyone can Google, copy and paste!). You score points for clearly stating and effectively defending a comparative hypothesis (the main message of your research) with the use of well-crafted arguments and data analyses. I don’t expect you come into the course already knowing how to produce a high-quality analytical research piece. I expect you to work hard and seek my advice in order to learn how to do it. Discussing your ideas with me during the semester is “fair game” and strongly recommended. I know some of you think of the presentation as an “easy grade.” DO NOT count on it. I will carefully review the content of your presentation and may ask you to answer some questions to me.

**What is expected from my Macroeconomic Country Reports?**

Working in groups of 2 or 3 students, you will choose to “adopt” two countries from a set I will provide after the first day of classes. I expect students to learn basic economic characteristics and main economic issues associated with those countries. I will then assign a kind of “homework” that consists in applying the theory and concepts discussed in class to your “adopted” countries. You will be asked to obtain and analyze actual country data to answer questions in these reports. I will be glad to help you find data and to provide comments and suggestions on your reports during office hours.

I recommend these sites for country data collection:

* World Bank: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>
* IMF: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2015/01/weodata/index.aspx>

In addition, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/> provides you with quick data visualization tools but does not allow you to download the data (unless you pay for the subscription)

You must submit your reports in only one file: use Microsoft Excel to build your charts but copy and paste them onto a Word file with your answers. All reports should be e-mailed to me before 11:59 pm on the due date (you don’t need to deliver it in person). Your assignment will lose 20 points for each day that you are late.

I believe these reports are a great instrument to help you acquire hands-on, practical economic knowledge and data management and interpretation skills. Hence, if you come to my office hours, I am willing to help you find data and answer any question you may have about the country report you are preparing.

**Working in groups**

* *The right way*: Working in groups is meant to improve the quality of your reports/papers and deepen your understanding of the material (which leads to higher exam scores). Those benefits come mainly from the exchange of ideas, discussions (in person or online), and from each group member checking the work of the others. I consider group work as a way for you to deliver a product with much higher quality than if done individually. Even if busy schedules do not allow for frequent, in-person meetings, if you plan ahead and get organized, you should be able to collaborate remotely via e-mail, Skype, etc. I know it’s possible: in the last few years I have co-authored three research papers with people who live in other countries, without ever working in the same room.
* *The wrong way*: Unfortunately, many students view group work as a way to deliver the same average-quality assignment with each student doing less of the work. Trust me: it is very clear when groups “split the work” and have some members write about a country and other members write about another country without ever discussing a comparative hypothesis and the proper arguments to support it. These parts prepared in isolation never come together in the way they would if the group followed my recommendations. It is also fairly common that students wait until “the last minute” to get started, which makes it harder to reconcile their schedules and to get my help before the submission deadline (remember that I would be glad to provide comments and suggestions on any of your work if you come to my office hours or catch me before/after class).
* *Free-riders and other group problems*: Also unfortunate is that some students make no effort to contribute to the group work and expect to “tag along” on the assignment grade. Remember that adding the name of a student who did not contribute to a group project may represent a violation of Academic Honesty, and all group members may suffer sanctions. If someone in your group is not contributing to the group work, it is your duty to exclude that student from the group assignment submission. I expect that each group would find its own preferred way to organize the internal work and solve minor disagreements: learning to manage a group project is a very desirable skill that the MVS School wants you to obtain. However, if disagreements and lack of participation become more serious, please report the problem to me. I may interfere in the group and exclude some members.

**Practice questions and problems**

The textbook has several review questions and exercises at the end of each chapter. My slides often contain suggestions of which questions I find most useful to help you understand the material. In addition, I will prepare and post problem sets after each major block of material. You do not have to turn them in and they will not be graded - it is your personal choice and responsibility to work on them. HOWEVER, I find it very unlikely that you will do well in the course without working through these problems. Please come to my office hours and I will be glad to go over your answers with you.

**Communication Rules**

1. I do not teach through e-mail. Students in my courses always have many chances to ask questions about the material during lecture and during my office hours. Especially if you miss lecture, come to my office hours: please do not ask me to explain the material via email.
2. As mentioned above, I am willing to review any optional homework answers and any early drafts of your research when students come to my office hours. I will not provide written comments on things sent to me via e-mail.
3. It happened in the past that some students did not find my scheduled office hours as convenient as they would like. Students would skip office hours and ask me for a special appointment for another time. That is not right or feasible. Therefore students must come to my office hours first. If needed and my schedule allows, I will stay longer or set up a special appointment to finish what we started during regular office hours.
4. Before sending me an email asking questions about the course, students should please look for the answer in this syllabus and all other material I post on the course web page. Other things will likely come up, and I surely will be glad to answer those questions that are not already answered here or in postings on Blackboard.

**What have former students done to succeed in this course?**

Based on more than one thousand students I taught and observed over the years, and from conversations I had with many of them, I have compiled a list with very important things you should consider in order to do well in the course:

**Do:** Read this entire syllabus very carefully, and consider all information and advice contained here. The same applies to the other information and advice posted under “course information” on the course site.

**Don’t:** Ignore any of the information and advice contained in this syllabus and other material posted on course site.

**Do:** Study, work hard, ask questions, do practice problems, come to my office hours, and see one of our great LRC tutors until you learn the material and can successfully answer most of the practice problems in your textbook and extra assignments I will provide.

**Don’t:** Think that you will be ok if you do not understand part of the material and fall behind in the course. Do not fall behind in this course: subjects are inter-related, and not understanding something one week means you will not understand something else later.

**Do:** Understand that you earn your grades by learning the material, answering exam questions correctly, and preparing professional-quality country reports and presentations.

**Don’t:** Think that you will pass the course just by showing up to lecture or by being given extra credit for trying, for being nice, or for having a busy life.

**Do:** Understand that I set the standards and work hard to help you learn the course material which is the same as in any decent “Intermediate Macroeconomics” course around the world. Some students do have to make more effort than others; that is how it works in the real world too.

**Don’t:** Believe that because you may have previously passed courses without learning the material, the same thing will happen in this course because I will lower the standards to accommodate underperformance.

**Do:** Learn the connections, the causes and effects of a movement in an economic variable. Learn to analyze causes and consequences of macroeconomic events and policy changes.

**Don’t:** Try to simply memorize the many examples I give in class or think that knowing definitions will be enough.

**Academic Honesty**

*1. Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty. It usually involves an attempt by a student to show possession of a level of knowledge or skill that he/she does not possess.*

*2. Course instructors have the initial responsibility for detecting and dealing with academic dishonesty. Instructors who believe that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred are obligated to discuss the matter with the student(s) involved. Instructors should possess reasonable evidence of academic dishonesty. However, if circumstances prevent consultation with student(s), instructors may take whatever action (subject to student appeal) they deem appropriate.*

*3. Instructors who are convinced by the evidence that a student is guilty of academic dishonesty shall assign an appropriate academic penalty. If the instructors believe that the academic dishonesty reflects on the student's academic performance or the academic integrity in a course, the student's grade should be adversely affected. Suggested guidelines for appropriate actions are: an oral reprimand in cases where there is reasonable doubt that the student knew his/her action constituted academic dishonesty; a failing grade on the particular paper, project or examination where the act of dishonesty was unpremeditated, or where there were significant mitigating circumstances; a failing grade in the course where the dishonesty was premeditated or planned. The instructors will file incident reports with the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and for Student Affairs or their designees. These reports shall include a description of the alleged incident of academic dishonesty, any relevant documentation, and any recommendations for action that he/she deems appropriate.*

*4. The Vice President for Student Affairs shall maintain an Academic Dishonesty File of all cases of academic dishonesty with the appropriate documentation.*

*5. Student may appeal any actions taken on charges of academic dishonesty to the "Academic Appeals Board."*

*6. The Academic Appeals Board shall consist of faculty and at least one student.*

*7. Individuals may not participate as members of the Academic Appeals Board if they are participants in an appeal.*

*8. The decision of the Academic Appeals Board will be forwarded to the President of CSU Channel Islands, whose decision is final.*

# Disability Accommodations:

# *Cal State Channel Islands is committed to equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The mission of Disability Accommodation Services is to assist students with disabilities to realize their academic and personal potential. Students with physical, learning, or other disabilities are encouraged to contact the Disability Accommodation Services office at (805) 437-8510 for personal assistance and accommodations.*

**Notice**

Information contained in this syllabus, other than that mandated by the University, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

1. Please see: <http://catalog.csuci.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=680#Credit_Hour> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Under special circumstances (like group members not collaborating to the assignments), I will allow students to work alone or change groups. Come talk to me if an issue arises – don’t wait until days before assignments are due! [↑](#footnote-ref-2)