Topics in Environmental Economics (Listed as “Seminar: Natural Resources)
Economics Graduate Program
University of Colorado - Boulder

Class Location: Humanities 335
Time: Tuesday/Thursday 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. and by appointment

A. General Information

This course will consist primarily of research topics in environmental and resource economics. In some cases the issues will be developed from literature outside the field. These cases are intended to provide opportunities for new research. In others, existing research in an area of environmental economics will be combined with seemingly unrelated papers to suggest the potential for new approaches. The purpose is to focus attention on potential dissertation topics. In addition, there will be a modest amount of material on non-renewable and renewable resource allocation problems. This material will be covered toward the end of the semester and should be considered an introduction.

In all elements, the class is structured to help prepare students for transitioning into dissertation work and eventually the job market (the real world looms on the horizon!). The presentations, quantitative projects and discussion format reflect this goal. The topics we will be covering in class were chosen because of their relevance (as perceived by me) and their potential as a dissertation topic here at CU. My goal is a relaxed atmosphere in which you are all working very hard (if it doesn’t kill you it makes you stronger), getting tangible rewards and enjoying the class.
B. Requirements

Grades will be based on three aspects of each participant's performance:

(a) One exam (mid-semester, date to be announced) 25%

(b) Two-four “small” quantitative projects/referee reports assigned throughout the semester - 25%.

(c) One “large” quantitative project, topic chosen by each student, due on the day at which the final exam is scheduled – 25%. (note: master’s students will have a much lower bar – or conversely, the bar will be raised for Ph.D. students. 😃)

(d) A review paper (5-10 pages) and lecture, topic chosen jointly with instructor. The last 4 or 5 weeks of class will be comprised of these student lectures. – 25%.

(e) Class preparation and participation – 25%.

C. Logistics

By registering for this class I assume you have a serious interest in environmental economics. This interest translates into a commitment to begin to function like a professional economist actively involved in the field. The practical realization of this behavior is that I will assume every class member will have read the appropriate articles BEFORE class each Tuesday and Thursday. In general, the format of the class will not involve the instructor (me) standing at the chalkboard lecturing. Instead, we will be working through the assigned papers as a group. The class as a whole will be responsible for making this discussion a productive activity. The responsibility of the students (you) in making this work is reflected in the fact that 25% (out of a total of 125% - go figure) of your grade will be based on your performance in this setting.

Review Paper and Class Presentations – I will work with each student to identify a topic for his/her review paper and presentation. The basic goal is to identify an area in the literature of interest to each student. The review paper will summarize the literature in this area and the class presentation will be a lecture in the chosen area that focuses on one or two papers and places them in the context of the literature. So as not to waste the time of your fellow students (and myself) the graduate student presentations will be held to a very high standard.
READINGS

I. Thinking About Welfare from an Empirical Perspective

II. Hedonic Method

   Basic Theory

   Extensions
III. Individual Data Discrete Choice Models

Introduction


Traditional Estimation Strategies

q. Train (2002) “Discrete Choice Methods with Simulation” forthcoming manuscript: MIT Press. (Currently available online at Professor Train’s Web Site at Berkeley)

Corner Solution Models


IV. Aggregate Discrete Choice Models


V. Locational Equilibrium Models (actually a subset of category IV)


VI. The Double Dividend Literature


VII. Spatial Modeling and Environmental Economics

Background


Use of Spatial Delineation


Issues for Analysis


VIII. Urban Economics/Urban Environment (Selected Stuff)


IX. Topics in Resource Economics

lll. Dorfman (196X) “An Economic Interpretation of Optimal Control Theory,” AER

