

Economics 130: Topics in Environmental Economics

Course Description

Instructor: Jay Shimshack, Assistant Professor
Braker Hall 310
Phone: 617.627.5947
Email: jay.shimshack@tufts.edu

Course Overview:

Economics 130 will emphasize 3 topics. First, the course will present an overview of the basic tools necessary to intelligently read and critique modern economic studies. Topics in this area include a review of economic optimization, a primer on key concepts in statistics and econometrics, and an overview of many common concerns in applied economics. This portion of the course will be mostly lecture oriented.

Second, the course will examine the measurement of environmental and natural resource values. We will try to answer questions like: How would one put a value on the damages from the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989? How would one put a value on the benefits of the Clean Water Act? Should we be valuing these things at all? We will go beyond the basics; the aim is to expose students to how these valuation techniques are actually done in practice. Topics include benefits transfer, the travel cost method, the hedonic pricing method, and contingent valuation. This portion of the course will entail some lectures and a lot of paper discussions.

Third, the course will examine the research process and the written and oral presentation of research outputs. Students will write their own original research paper, present preliminary and final work, and actively discuss and evaluate their classmates' papers. Students will do nearly all of the work in this area.

Note: the three topics will not be presented linearly. For example, we may discuss some common econometric problems in empirical studies while critiquing a valuation paper or a students' research proposal.