Economics 312 – Term Paper Guidelines

1. Choosing a paper topic

For the term paper, you should choose a subject related to one of the topics discussed in this class that you wish to explore. You should approach this topic from the perspective of an individual country. More specifically, you should think about yourself as an economic advisor to the head of government of a specific country. It is your job to advise the head of government on a current international trade subject in which that country has a substantial interest. You should identify and define the international trade concern, provide a background analysis of the problem, discuss alternative policies that can be adopted and make your recommendation. You will do that by writing a technical report on this issue. Remember that you are a trained economist and as such you are familiar with the theoretical framework as well as empirical studies pertaining to the trade problem you chose to discuss; this assignment will give you the opportunity to apply this knowledge to a practical trade policy question.

Here are some examples of the kind of topics you could cover: Should the U.S. congress push for a reduction in U.S. agricultural subsidies that was multilaterally negotiated at the WTO? Should Pakistan take a position against incorporating provisions for upholding environmental standards through the WTO agreement? Should Brazil advocate for introducing more specific guidelines regarding the protection of ‘traditional knowledge’ in the TRIPs agreement?

Students are encouraged to work together in finding and discussing course materials. Of course, the final papers should be written individually.

2. Submitting a research proposal

A research proposal is due on March 30 by 5 p.m. This proposal should briefly describe the issue/research question you wish to explore and include a survey of the literature, as well as a preliminary list of references. The proposal should comply with the following format requirements: 12pt font, standard margins, 1.5 or 2.0 line spacing. Please refer to “Doing Economics”, appendix 2A, for more details on writing a research proposal.

3. Presenting your results

Each student will be responsible for a 20-minute presentation on her paper topic. You will also be responsible for providing comments on other students’ presentations. The presentations will take place on April 23 and April 30. You should use powerpoint and provide me with a copy of your presentation. You can also prepare handouts for your classmates. Please refer to a document called “Presentation Criteria” posted online for information on how your performance will be evaluated. And check “Giving an Effective
Presentation” (http://www.cswep.org/PDFs/top10_list.pdf) by the Committee for the Status of Women in the Economics Profession.

4. Submitting your final paper

Papers should not exceed 20 pages (including references, tables, graphs, etc) and should comply with the format requirements specified for your essays (12pt font, standard margins, 1.5 or 2.0 line spacing).

Realistically, your head of government will not read a 20-page technical report, so the first page of your report should include a 250-word abstract that summarizes the findings of your report and your policy recommendation (think about it as a one-paragraph memo that your head of government might actually read!).

Your final paper is due on May 11 by 5 p.m. You have to submit a hardcopy (delivered to my mailbox) as well as an electronic version of the paper (word or pdf file - submitted as an attachment through ella). Both versions should be identical. There is no extension to this deadline (unless in cases of extreme medical or family emergencies). **You will be deducted 20 points (out of 100) per each day you delay turning in your paper.**
Checklist: your paper should follow as closely as possible these guidelines:

1. Your paper should include an introduction, a main body (which can include various sections and/or subsections), and a conclusion.

2. In the introduction you should state the research question that your paper addresses, identify the methodology you are using to answer that question (for example, are you conducting an empirical investigation? are you focusing on a particular theoretical framework?, etc.), summarize your main research findings, and also provide an outline of your paper (the last paragraph in your introduction should state how the paper is organized – Section 2 provides a review of the literature, Section 3 discusses …, etc.).

3. Each paper will have a different ‘main body’, but the general idea is to develop a coherent set of arguments that allows you to answer your research question and supports the conclusion of your paper.

4. The concluding section should summarize your findings, suggest policy implications (if there are any), as well as identify areas for further research.

5. Your paper should include a bibliography. I prefer that you use the reference-in-text style: http://academic.reed.edu/economics/parker/Citation

6. Graphs, tables, and/or other figures should be included last. You should avoid using figures or tables copied from other sources. Instead, you should try to collect data from raw sources and figure out the best way to present it to the reader. All tables and figures need to be referenced properly; be sure to explain and cite all your data sources.

7. In order to avoid plagiarism, make sure that you properly identify all of your sources. A case of plagiarism will result in a zero score for your paper (as well as your presentation) and most likely will result in a failing grade for this course.

8. The paper should not exceed 20 pages (including references, tables, graphs, etc) and should comply with the following format requirements: 12pt font, standard margins, 1.5 or 2.0 line spacing.

9. Finally, it also should include a 250-word abstract that summarizes your main findings.