

## Course Project Guidelines

For your in-class debate, your group should be prepared to argue for your assigned policy option, and against the opposing option. Unlike much of what passes for public debate of the issues today, though, your presentation may not rely solely on name-calling and sound-bite proclamations! (although, feel free to spice it up with some ☺) Rather, whenever possible you must use economic analysis to support/refute positions. You should also take into account political realities and public opinions. Note that, in general, there will not be an obviously right or wrong approach to the problem, but the study of labour economics should help you to better understand the issues involved. It is important that policy formation stem from well-informed choices, rather than misinformation and /or ignorance. If you have any questions about the project be sure to ask me, preferably early on in the process.

### UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMICS OF THE TOPIC -

To prepare for your presentation, you will first need to understand the economics of the main issues involved in the policy debate. To help you do this, several articles have been identified and listed below along with links (where available). First, for each topic, there is a reading listed below for the entire class to read for the day of the debate. These articles are all fairly accessible to student readers, and thus you should be able to understand the discussion of the economic issues and the current economic research. For each topic, I have also listed a much more in-depth article or two to get you started. As these articles are somewhat more difficult to understand, you should note that I do not expect you to pick up on the more technical aspects of the paper(s). Your textbook is also a good general resource to identify potential papers.

#### *Discrimination and Employment Equity Policy Reforms (November 6<sup>th</sup>)*

Class:

Pendakur, Krishna and Ravi Pendakur, "Colour My World: Have Earnings Gaps for Canadian-Born Ethnic Minorities Changed Over Time?," *Canadian Public Policy*, Vol 28, No.4, 2002.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3552211>

Group:

Baker, Michael and Nicole Fortin, "Does Comparable Worth Work in a Decentralized Labor Market?," NBER Working Paper #7937.

<http://repec.economics.utoronto.ca/files/UT-ECIPA-BAKER-00-02.pdf>

Bertrand M., and Sendhil Mullainathan "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination", *The American Economic Review* Vol. 94, No. 4 (Sep., 2004), pp. 991-1013

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3592802>

### *Immigration Policy and Reform (November 15<sup>th</sup>)*

Class:

Picot, Garnett, and Arthur Sweetman (2005) “The Deteriorating Economic Welfare of Immigrants and Possible Causes: Update 2005” Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 11F0019MIE — No. 262.

<http://publications.gc.ca/site/archievee-archived.html?url=http://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2005262.pdf>

Group:

Picot, Garnett, and Feng Hou (2016) “Changing Immigrant Characteristics and Entry Earnings” Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 11F0019MIE — No. 374.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2016374-eng.pdf?st=PHEPi60M>

Beach Charles M., Alan G. Green, and Christopher Worswick (2007) Impacts of the Point System and Immigration Policy Levers on Skill Characteristics of Canadian Immigrants ,in Professor Solomon Polachek, Dr Konstantinos Tatsiramos (ed.) Immigration (Research in Labor Economics, Volume 27), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.349-401

[http://qed.econ.queensu.ca/working\\_papers/papers/qed\\_wp\\_1115.pdf](http://qed.econ.queensu.ca/working_papers/papers/qed_wp_1115.pdf)

Aydemir, A., and Mikal Skuterud (2004) “Explaining the Deteriorating Entry Earnings of Canada's Immigrant Cohorts, 1966 – 2000”, *The Canadian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 641-671

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3696051>

### *Education Expenditure Reform (November 22<sup>nd</sup>)*

Class:

Boudarbat, B., T. Lemieux, and W.C. Riddell. (2010), “The Evolution of the Returns to Human Capital in Canada, 1980–2005,” *Canadian Public Policy*, 36, March, pp. 63-89.

<http://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/cpp.36.1.63>

Group:

Moretti, E. (2004). Human capital externalities in cities. *Handbook of regional and urban economics*, 4, 2243-2291.

[Link](#)

Oreopoulos, P. (2006). The compelling effects of compulsory schooling: Evidence from Canada. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économie*, 39(1), 22-52.

[Link](#)

## *Welfare Policy Reform (November 29<sup>th</sup>)*

Class:

Picot, Garnett and John Myles (1996), "Social Transfers, Changing Family Structure and Low Income Among Children," Canadian Public Policy, 22, No. 3, pp. 244-259.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3551504>

Group:

Lemieux Thomas, and Kevin Milligan (2008) "Incentive effects of social assistance: A regression discontinuity approach", Journal of Econometrics, Volume 142, Issue 2, Pages 807-828

[Link](#)

Bernard Fortina, Guy Lacroix, and Simon Drolet (2004) "Welfare benefits and the duration of welfare spells: evidence from a natural experiment in Canada", Journal of Public Economics, 88, Pages 1495– 1520

[Link](#)

## UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC OPINION AND CURRENT POLICY -

In addition to the economics of the issue, you will also want to investigate the current policy climate and gain insight into current public opinions and concerns. A good tool for this task is the Internet -- a good search engine is likely to turn up many good resources. Do be aware that **anyone** can put information up on the Internet, so you need to be vigilant about checking what the source of your information is and making a judgment about its reliability. You'll probably want to avoid individuals' web sites and stick to those belonging to established organizations. Needless to say, the library is also a useful tool. Preferably, your investigations will lead you to both electronic and non-electronic sources. You want to look for more than just facts, but also for what sorts of policies are currently under consideration. You also want to get a feel for what sorts of policies are likely to be politically feasible, given the current state of public opinion.

## PREPARING THE IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

There is a fair amount of flexibility in how your group approaches the debate. For starters, you will want to be prepared to argue for the general spirit of your option and against the general spirit of the opposing option. You will want to come up with some fairly specific recommendations of how to proceed that are in keeping with the spirit of your option, and then argue for their implementation. Additionally, it will be helpful to try to anticipate the types of arguments the opposing group is likely to make in order to be prepared to most effectively counter these arguments. In order to ensure that everyone in the group participates, the following basic structure will be followed for the debate. The group winning a coin toss will have the choice to speak first or to make the other group speak first. The group going first will then spend about 15 minutes presenting arguments in support of their policy and against the opposing option. (It is up to the group to decide who says what, etc., but everyone should be involved in either the presentation of material or preparation.) The opposing group will then

do the same. Try to avoid turning this segment into just another lecture. Especially avoid just reading facts off of a piece of paper – you are trying to actively persuade the audience that your policy is the most appropriate! The first group will then have approximately 5 minutes (overall - it's up to you how to assign speaking duties) to reply, followed by about 5 minutes for the second group. The debate will then be opened up to questions from the entire class (including debate group participants). The class will be reading a simpler article on the topic, shown on the guidelines, and should come prepared to participate with questions, etc. You should be prepared to defend your policy during this discussion phase and to provide clarifying facts. Throughout, I will serve as moderator of the debate.

## PREPARING THE WRITTEN PROJECT

Your written project is due **in the course mailbox on December 13<sup>th</sup> by 4:00 pm**. Harsh penalties will be assessed for missing this deadline! Your paper will take the form of an individually written "Memo to the Prime Minister" or "Memo to the Premier" on why he should implement your assigned policy option. It should represent your own interpretation of the arguments in favour of the policy. Be sure to include references to support your facts, descriptions of current legislation, representations of public opinion, etc. It will be graded primarily on the clarity of the presentation and the clarity and correctness of the economic analysis of the issues. You should strive to prepare a well-written paper that does not ramble needlessly - the Prime Minister and Premier are busy people and do not have time to wade through superfluous material. Thus, a limit of 5 double-spaced pages will be strictly enforced. Note that the Prime Minister's (Premier's) eyes are also failing, so no minuscule font sizes! Your references do not count in this page limit, nor do any diagrams, charts, tables, etc. that you may deem necessary for your argument.