-Econ 281f
CHALLENGES IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY:
International Trade and Development

SPRING 2019

Syllabus

Course Description
This capstone course for the IBS MA program is a highly interactive class. Students apply the tools and concepts from international trade, microeconomics, statistics, and economic development to analyze current challenges facing policymakers, firms and international organizations. The focus will be on trade agreements, trade barriers, global firm production networks, and firm access to finance. Using rigorous analysis and research, students will evaluate key global issues in-depth. They will present their views persuasively, in class discussion, two short policy memos, and a team mock consulting project, involving oral presentation and a written report.

Learning goals
1. Present well-articulated, in-depth economic analysis of current global policy issues, using concepts and tools from international trade, economic development, microeconomics, and statistics.
2. Research, present and defend a position on a current global policy issue, with a well-reasoned and compelling economic analysis that reveals knowledge of both sides of the issue.
3. Write a well-argued policy analysis evaluating a current global issue, using in-depth economic analysis.
4. Analyze and present data effectively in discussions, oral presentations, and written analyses.

Course Structure
The first part of this module will cover four current policy topics in international trade and development. For each topic, we will study two papers that introduce the broad policy debate, take different viewpoints, and provide economic arguments and evidence to support these viewpoints.

In the second part of the course, student teams will present and defend a position paper, as part of a mock consulting project. There will be mock hearings on current major policy controversies. Each team will “testify” in a mock hearing before a “review panel” of students. The team will then be challenged with questions from the review panel, and from the rest of the class.

Prerequisites
Econ 260a or equivalent undergraduate course, or permission from the instructor.
This course assumes the student has taken a full semester international trade course at undergraduate or MA level.

Required reading
Required reading will include professional studies by scholars and by international organizations, and professional journal articles (via Brandeis Scholar or online) posted on LATTE.

Optional textbooks for reference
There are no textbooks for this class. However, students may wish to consult a standard textbook, such as: R. Feenstra and A. Taylor, International Economics or S. Husted and M. Melvin, International Economics.
Grading
1. Short Policy Memos (2) (34%)

2. Mock Consulting Project (36%)
   - Team hearing presentation
   - Team written report

3. Class participation (30%)
   - Class discussion and attendance
   - Student hearing panel

Overview of Assignments
1. Short Policy Memos (34%). Students will write two short policy memos (3 pages). Each memo will take a position on a topic, and argue that position using the two papers discussed in class. Further instructions and due dates will be discussed in class and posted on LATTE.

2. Mock Consulting Project (36%). Each student will serve on one consulting project team, “hired” by a firm, and will research a controversial policy question for their “clients.” The dates and topics are listed in the Course Outline.
   - Oral Presentation. Each team will “testify” at a mock hearing in the last 2 weeks of the module. A student “hearing panel” will challenge the team with prepared questions.
   - Final Report. The team will submit a written final report. Due date announced in class.

Student consulting teams will be formed within the first week of class. A student’s grade will be based on the oral presentation and the written report. The grade will be a weighted average of the student’s individual performance (35%) and the team’s performance (65%). Further instructions will be provided in class and on LATTE.

3. Class Participation (30%). Student participation in class is crucial. Participation will be a weighted average of:
   - Class discussion—comments (80%) and attendance (20%). Student comments in class will be scored based on both frequency and quality. An absence will mean a score of zero for attendance and zero for classroom contribution that day.
   - Student hearing panel. Each student will serve on one hearing panel, challenging the consulting team with prepared questions and with responses to the team’s presentation.

In each class meeting, classroom contributions will be scored as follows: an excellent contribution that moves the discussion forward significantly (3); a good contribution that provokes some discussion (2); a standard contribution (1); no contribution (0).

Policy on Use of Computers, Tablets and Phones in Class
During class, your computer, tablet and phone must be closed and in your bag. Violation of this policy will be equivalent to an absence.

Class Preparation.
Preparation prior to each class meeting is mandatory. The goal for each class is to (1) thoroughly and rigorously discuss the economic issues raised in the readings and (2) achieve involvement of most of the students in the classroom discussion. Everyone must be prepared to participate.
Discussion Structure:
1. ASSESSING THE QUESTION. What is the main question examined in this paper? Why is it important? What economic issues and concepts must be dealt with to answer the question?

2. IDENTIFYING THE ARGUMENTS. What are the key economic arguments the authors use to build their case? What explanations and evidence are presented to support these arguments?

3. EVALUATING THE CASE. Are you convinced by the authors’ arguments? What are the strengths and weaknesses in the analysis? Do you agree with the overall conclusions?

Workload
Success in this two-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Academic Honesty
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. This is your responsibility. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty—such as plagiarism—can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

Disabilities
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
Draft Syllabus _1-18-2019 | Prof. Dean

Draft Readings and Course Outline
(* indicates required reading)

OVERVIEW

Class 1: January 16

_The battle over international trade_

Overview of course and requirements

**TOPIC 1: Free Trade Agreements: do they really harm the economy?**

Class 2: January 22 (Brandeis Monday)

Class 3: January 23

**TOPIC 2: Lost Jobs: a new argument for protection?**

Class 4: January 28

Class 5: January 30

**TOPIC 3: Global Value Chains (GVCs): a new source of comparative advantage?**

Class 6: February 4

Class 7: February 6

**TOPIC 4: Access to Finance: the new engine of growth for development?**

Class 8: February 11

Class 9: February 13
MOCK Consulting Projects: team presentations

Class 10: February 25
Hearing: The new provisions in the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)
   Clients: Trade Ministers of Mexico and Canada
   Complaint: The new provisions demanded by the US reduce the overall benefits of the new agreement
   Venue: the final NAFTA/USMCA negotiations

*Class reading and team resources posted on LATTE

Class 11: February 27
Hearing: Technology theft and the US-China trade war
   Client: Chinese Ministry of Commerce
   Complaint: The trade war is costly and will not solve the problem
   Venue: the World Trade Organization

*Class reading and team resources posted on LATTE

Class 12: March 4
Hearing: The US steel tariffs and quotas
   Clients: the governments of the EU, China, Mexico, Canada, India
   Complaint: These policies reduce welfare without improving national security
   Venue: the US International Trade Commission

*Class reading and team resources posted on LATTE

Class 13: March 6
Hearing: Potential US trade barriers against Mexican and Canadian autos
   Clients: Ford Motor Co. and General Motors
   Complaint: These policies hurt US auto producers and make their products less competitive
   Hearing: the US International Trade Commission

*Class reading and team resources posted on LATTE

Class 14: March 11
Hearing: China WTO Dispute against US solar panel tariffs
   Clients: Chinese Ministry of Commerce
   Complaint: These barriers distort international markets and violate the WTO agreement
   Hearing: the World Trade Organization

*Class reading and team resources posted on LATTE