SP 2024-25 — BEM/Ec/ESE 119

Environmental Economics

Response Rate

	Total Responses	Total Enrolled
Course	33	39

What Is The Primary Reason You Took This Course?

	It fulfills a requirement within my option/minor	It fulfills a requirement of the Core	It has a good reputation	I was interested in the subject matter	Other	Not Answered
Course Average	27%	45%	9%	15%	0%	3%
Department Average	21%	29%	10%	37%	0%	1%
Division Average	15%	51%	6%	24%	0%	1%
Survey Average	40%	29%	2%	25%	0%	1%

Did The Coursework Match The Number Of Units Listed In The Catalog?

	No. The workload was significantly higher.	No. The workload was slightly higher.	Yes. The workload matched the number of units.	No. The workload was slightly lower.	No. The workload was significantly lower.	Not Answered
Course Average	0%	0%	69%	24%	3%	3%
Department Average	0%	1%	62%	26%	8%	1%
Division Average	0%	3%	55%	27%	11%	2%
Survey Average	5%	12%	57%	15%	6%	1%

How Many Lectures Did You Attend?

	All	Most	Some	Few	None	N/A	Not Answered
Course Average	0%	36%	45%	9%	3%	0%	6%
Department Average	25%	46%	20%	3%	1%	0%	2%
Division Average	43%	34%	8%	6%	4%	0%	2%
Survey Average	42%	31%	10%	8%	3%	1%	1%

How Many Hours Did You Spend On Coursework Outside Of Class Per Week On Average?

	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-19	20-23	24+	Not Answered
Course Average	0%	18%	69%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Department Average	0%	26%	63%	7%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Division Average	2%	37%	45%	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%

Survey Average	5%	26%	36%	17%	7%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%

How Much Of The Assigned Class Homework Did You Complete?

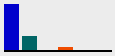
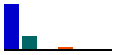
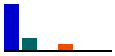
	All	Most	Some	Little	None	N/A	Not Answered
Course Average	**90%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**3%**
Department Average	93%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Division Average	88%	5%	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Survey Average	84%	7%	0%	0%	0%	4%	1%

What Grade Do You Expect To Receive In This Course?

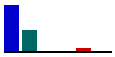
	A	B	C	D	F	Pass	Fail	Not Answered
Course Average	**69%**	**24%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**6%**
Department Average	77%	10%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	5%
Division Average	73%	7%	0%	0%	0%	15%	0%	4%
Survey Average	66%	8%	1%	0%	0%	20%	0%	3%

Course Section: BEM/Ec/ESE 119

Course Content and Organization

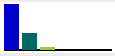
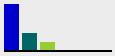
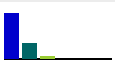
		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
This course encouraged my interest in the material.		**4.43** ± 0.80	4.61	4.50	4.34
The learning objectives of this course were clearly communicated.		**4.70** ± 0.64	4.75	4.56	4.45
The course policies and expectations were clearly communicated.		**4.70** ± 0.64	4.72	4.60	4.46
The course content was clearly organized.		**4.73** ± 0.63	4.68	4.57	4.40
The evaluation criteria (for homework, exams, lab reports, etc.) were clearly communicated.		**4.63** ± 0.80	4.53	4.40	4.26

Learning Environment

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
I had the resources I needed to succeed (i.e., instructor support, course materials, TA support).		**4.57** ± 0.80	4.72	4.61	4.52
I felt this course provided a supportive, welcoming learning environment.		**4.67** ± 0.65	4.80	4.63	4.55

Instructor Section: Hannah Druckenmiller

Instruction

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
The instructor explained concepts clearly.		**4.67** ± 0.54	4.82	4.69	4.44
The instructor encouraged me to engage deeply and/or critically with the subject matter.		**4.57** ± 0.67	4.82	4.66	4.51
The assignments were meaningfully connected to the course topics.		**4.70** ± 0.53	4.84	4.64	4.51
I received timely feedback on assignments.		**4.73** ± 0.51	4.81	4.59	4.33

I found the feedback on assignments helpful.	**4.62** ± 0.55	4.79	4.52	4.31
The instructor was available for questions or additional help if I needed it.	**4.60** ± 0.55	4.77	4.68	4.55

Teaching Assistant Section: Kexin Feng

Supplemental TA Questions

	Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
My TA provided helpful comments on assignments, papers, and/or exams.	**4.62** ± 0.84	4.70	4.60	4.70
My TA answered questions clearly.	**4.73** ± 0.86	4.78	4.70	4.72
My TA was well prepared in instructional settings.	**4.91** ± 0.29	4.89	4.78	4.73
My TA presented material clearly in instructional settings.	**4.91** ± 0.29	4.89	4.77	4.74

Comments

For Kexin Feng: What aspects of this TA's teaching did you find helpful? What aspects could be improved to help future students in their learning?

Very responsive and helpful at office hours.
She was very helpful during office hours and explained concepts clearly
Kexin was super helpful during office hours! She very well prepared and also very responsive over email, which I really appreciated.
Really appreciated the time spent explaining concepts so they can be properly understood.
Very prompt with grading which is nice
She explained the material very well and created a very welcoming environment.

What would you tell a student thinking about taking this course in the future?

This course is really fun. Must take and go to class!
Would definitely suggest that students take this course because it is very interesting and structured in a great way!
This is a great class! Really reasonable workload and definitely interesting!
Great class! Definitely a great course for BEM.
The class is an interesting mix of economics and environmental science and it's a good time if you're curious about the area. Sets are very Ec based, so only take if you enjoyed Ec11 or similar courses. Work is not too bad and the midterm game is fun.
great course -- very chill, prof. drunkenmiller is very nice and chill. only four problem sets, and each one is very chill, not demanding at all. the midterm consists of a pretty fun game where teams (randomly assigned) play as OPEQ countries and try to generate as much revenue as possible -- it's actually pretty fun. your performance in this midterm game does play a small part in your grade, but it's minor. content is also pretty interesting, for those of you who are environmentally inclined. there's a large economic theory backing environmental economics that harks back to ec11 microecon and other similar concepts.
This is a great class applying many of the topics learned in other BEM classes with an environmental focus. Workload is very reasonable.
Good environmental economics class, recommend taking it.
This course was a great introduction to environmental economics! The course begins with a brief review of general economics theory (think AP Macro) and then proceeds to connect these concepts to interactions with the environment. The course content is organized very clearly, and Professor Druckenmiller is really great at explaining concepts in a digestible format. The problem sets are not too challenging, and there are only 4 of them as well. The midterm is a class-wide game where groups of students pretend to be member nations of an oil cartel, and it's a very fun and low-stakes project. Overall, this class was extremely reasonable and surveys a great selection of topics for anyone interested in environmental economics (pricing externalities, overview of grid markets, etc.). I'd strongly recommend it to anyone who needs advanced economics or SS classes, or anyone who's just interested in the course content, since it's extremely manageable and taught/organized well.

If you're looking for a relatively low-pressure advanced social science I highly recommend this class. The content is interesting as it focuses on a lot of ties between environmental studies and economics and the sets are reasonable. There were 4 problem sets, a group game activity for the midterm, and a final.
Lecture is excellent, with plenty of examples to help understand the material. This class really contextualizes the ongoing struggle between sustainability and the economy.
I absolutely enjoyed this class, the information was relevant and the content was well taught. Student attendance declined significantly at the end of the quarter but I enjoyed every lecture! Problem sets were not too hard and did not take long to complete. Professor and TA were always very happy to help. Midterm is a game theory game and final is closed book. One of the best classes I have taken at Caltech.
I would have enjoyed the course more if it was more policy/case study focused, and less like ec11. I was a bit disengaged by the sets, since the parts of the course I was initially most interested in wasn't econ calculations and more so the implications of environmental econ. there are lots of supplementary resources available, but i wish the primary goals of the course were different.
A really chill, well taught class with some fun activities! Do note that this is more of a macroeconomics class in the context of environmental policy.
This is a really great course. Problem sets are reasonable and on the shorter side. The OPEQ game is a lot of fun.
A pretty chill course if you've taken and understand EC 11. I wasn't a fan of the final because it was closed book (honor code) and counted for 35% of our grade. I'd imagine many students took their liberties, which is always a bummer.
This class was a chill time, and the course material was not hard to understand. Professor Druckenmiller is an excellent lecturer. There are 4 sets and the TA was super helpful in checking the set/going through the problems. However, the final is closed notes and full of nuanced questions that require memorizing different parts of the whole course—this was lowkey rough for no reason and the only complaint I have about this course. Having a page of notes would be helpful for the future.
Slides and instruction are very clear, just spend a little more time than you think you should working on/checking the homework :) pretty chill class though
I really like the content. The course was taught very well and the homework matched what we learned. Grading is very fair.

FA 2023-24 — Ec 011

Introduction to Economics

Response Rate

	Total Responses	Total Enrolled
Course	16	46

What Is The Primary Reason You Took This Course?

	It fulfills a requirement within my option/minor	It fulfills a requirement of the Core	It has a good reputation	I was interested in the subject matter	Other	Not Answered
Course Average	**12%**	**87%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Department Average	44%	42%	2%	8%	0%	2%
Division Average	19%	53%	1%	21%	2%	1%
Survey Average	39%	30%	2%	25%	1%	0%

Did The Coursework Match The Number Of Units Listed In The Catalog?

	No. The workload was significantly higher.	No. The workload was slightly higher.	Yes. The workload matched the number of units.	No. The workload was slightly lower.	No. The workload was significantly lower.	Not Answered
Course Average	**0%**	**0%**	**25%**	**43%**	**31%**	**0%**
Department Average	0%	6%	42%	33%	15%	2%
Division Average	2%	6%	59%	26%	4%	1%
Survey Average	6%	15%	62%	11%	2%	1%

How Many Lectures Did You Attend?

	All	Most	Some	Few	None	N/A	Not Answered
Course Average	**12%**	**68%**	**18%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Department Average	24%	42%	15%	15%	0%	0%	2%
Division Average	58%	34%	3%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Survey Average	41%	34%	10%	8%	2%	1%	1%

How Many Hours Did You Spend On Coursework Outside Of Class Per Week On Average?

	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-19	20-23	24+	Not Answered
Course Average	**0%**	**81%**	**12%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Department Average	0%	53%	37%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Division Average	0%	46%	40%	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Survey Average	8%	21%	35%	19%	8%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%

How Much Of The Assigned Class Homework Did You Complete?

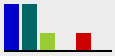
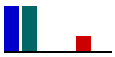
	All	Most	Some	Little	None	N/A	Not Answered
Course Average	**81%**	**18%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Department Average	77%	17%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Division Average	89%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Survey Average	80%	9%	0%	0%	0%	6%	1%

What Grade Do You Expect To Receive In This Course?

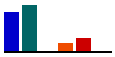
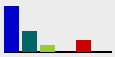
	A	B	C	D	F	Pass	Fail	Not Answered
Course Average	**37%**	**6%**	**6%**	**0%**	**0%**	**50%**	**0%**	**0%**
Department Average	62%	11%	4%	0%	0%	20%	0%	2%
Division Average	58%	10%	0%	0%	0%	29%	0%	1%
Survey Average	49%	12%	2%	0%	0%	33%	0%	2%

Course Section: Ec 011

Course Content and Organization

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
This course encouraged my interest in the material.		**3.12** ± 1.36	3.82	4.36	4.22
The learning objectives of this course were clearly communicated.		**3.88** ± 1.27	4.00	4.46	4.34
The course policies and expectations were clearly communicated.		**4.06** ± 1.25	4.18	4.55	4.46
The course content was clearly organized.		**3.94** ± 1.39	3.95	4.47	4.25
The evaluation criteria (for homework, exams, lab reports, etc.) were clearly communicated.		**4.06** ± 1.39	4.15	4.32	4.25

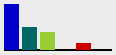
Learning Environment

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
I had the resources I needed to succeed (i.e., instructor support, course materials, TA support).		**3.88** ± 1.32	4.31	4.62	4.43
I felt this course provided a supportive, welcoming learning environment.		**4.12** ± 1.32	4.38	4.62	4.44

Instructor Section: Laura Taylor

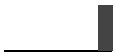
Instruction

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
The instructor explained concepts clearly.		**3.56** ± 1.32	4.21	4.58	4.28
The instructor encouraged me to engage deeply and/or critically with the subject matter.		**3.75** ± 1.03	4.29	4.66	4.36
The assignments were meaningfully connected to the course topics.		**4.06** ± 1.14	4.23	4.60	4.42
I received timely feedback on assignments.		**3.73** ± 1.34	3.92	4.53	4.16

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
I found the feedback on assignments helpful.		**3.43** ± 1.29	3.82	4.45	4.21
The instructor was available for questions or additional help if I needed it.		**4.12** ± 1.11	4.46	4.75	4.48

Teaching Assistant Section: Kexin Feng

Supplemental TA Questions

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
My TA provided helpful comments on assignments, papers, and/or exams.		**0.00** ± 0.00	4.57	3.68	4.62
My TA answered questions clearly.		**5.00** ± 0.00	4.57	4.26	4.66
My TA was well prepared in instructional settings.		**5.00** ± 0.00	4.57	4.44	4.69
My TA presented material clearly in instructional settings.		**5.00** ± 0.00	4.57	4.62	4.69

Lab: Ec 011

Integration with Course

		Score	Dept.	Div.	Caltech
Lab was well integrated into course structure		**2.00** ± 0.00	2.00	3.67	4.43

Comments

For Kexin Feng: What aspects of this TA's teaching did you find helpful? What aspects could be improved to help future students in their learning?

Kexin was great at answering questions clearly during recitation.

What would you tell a student thinking about taking this course in the future?

I took IB Econ in high school and thought that was poorly organized, but this was on an entirely different level. The lectures were entirely too theoretical and math based, and I lost interest almost immediately. In my opinion, the topics seemed out of order and presented in a very confusing way, with long derivations of things that seemed irrelevant, and the terminology used in this class was much different from what I had been previously exposed to. The grading is also extremely harsh for absolutely no reason, partial credit basically doesn't exist.

If you are thinking about skipping all of the lectures, the bad news is that you can't! The homework is graded on completion because there are random in-person quizzes at lecture each week that are worth 20% of your grade that consist of questions directly from the homework. You aren't told which day the quiz will be, so you basically have to attend every lecture. There is "extra credit" in this class, but all of the extra credit combined is only worth 1% of your grade, so it's pretty much useless. Overall, I would not recommend taking this class with this professor, perhaps winter term is better.

Dr. Taylor's lectures are engaging and informative, and I feel like I learned a lot even though the course did not require a huge time commitment. Sometimes lectures included fun games, and if you were in class and participated, you got extra credit! A big difference from most Caltech classes is that homework in this class is graded for completion rather than correctness, but there were weekly short in-class quizzes that drew heavily from the homework. On the one hand, this would make it very difficult to take the class with a course conflict; on the other hand, this system encourages lecture attendance and allows you to understand mistakes from the homework before being graded on your understanding. Dr. Taylor is very kind and wants to make sure this course isn't stressful. She seems to understand that most people in the class are taking it for the social sciences requirement and that this course may not be our top priority, but she puts effort into making it interesting.

I think that if you are interested in theoretical economics, this may be the course for you. :)

The midterm and final were closed-book, closed-note, so if you plan on taking the class on grades, make sure to put in the time to really understand (and probably memorize) all of the formulas you learn. Also, some of the study materials that were provided had some decently major errors (namely incorrect derivatives) but other than that I do think that those materials were useful in preparing for the midterm and final (in the sense that it

gave me an idea of what the test would cover). It also seems a bit unfair that quizzes were given on seemingly random days (but was a factor of this class), and we weren't allowed to make up these quizzes, so if you plan on skipping or missing lectures (or just have a full-on course conflict) make sure to do so strategically. There are also random opportunities for getting bonus points, which is nice, but the amount of bonus points you actually receive from these activities is quite minimal (I believe it was "up to 1 percentage point of your final grade" or something like that?), so I'm not really sure if these opportunities were quite worth it.

I would consider this a good option for an intro social science. That being said, it felt a little bit simple for an intro economics class. The assignments were graded for competition (which is fine, albeit they should be a bit more difficult in the future). The lectures weren't particularly engaging (but the activities that we did in class were pretty fun). If you want something that could be an easy A, take this class. But if you want something truly more engaging, this isn't your best bet.

This was a great class to take during an otherwise difficult term. I spent less than an hour on the sets (which were graded for completion), and the only reason I went to lecture was the in-class quizzes once per week, which usually just involved redoing the easiest homework problem from the week before. The midterm and final were significantly harder than the sets, though, which is why I decided to P/F the class after the midterm, which ended up being a good decision as I would have otherwise ended with an A-.

This was not a terrible class, but it suffered some noticeable issues:

- Required attendance/pop quizzes: No accommodations were made if you missed a class with a pop quiz, even if you let Dr. Taylor know beforehand. And the quizzes themselves were often directly referenced from the homework. They seemed to measure not a student's economic knowledge, but rather their willingness to memorize the homework and drag themselves to class.
- Uninteresting lectures: Lectures consisted of up to 50 slides of sparsely labeled graphs and paragraphs of text. The length and density made lectures slides difficult to sit though and difficult to parse later to study for homework/exams. I felt the information in the slides could be conveyed much more concisely, as even after reviewing them I missed key information for the midterm/final.
- Lack of clarity in grading policy. We never received midterm grades, extra credit points were not put in until after term, and extra credit points were *scaled down* from the raw points we earned in class. Moreover, the weighting of the extra credit points was not made clear on the syllabus. Even at the end of the course, I don't know my final grade percentage — Dr. Taylor has said we can email her to know, but I'm not that desperate.
- Lack of a curve. The midterm had median score 83.5%, and mean 78.3%. The final had median 82.5% and mean 80.8%. Dr. Taylor said "students did really well" and thus didn't curve. However, in another class I took this semester, quizzes with similar averages were curved so that an 80 was an A. Perhaps Dr. Taylor is following a model where the expected average is near a C but…come on! This is an introductory social science class. Many of us have no choice but to take it. Classes like these are supposed to give good grades to those who do the required work, not take most people's GPAs down for no reason.

If you are like me and don't have a strong background in economics, I would recommend taking this class P/F and putting in minimal effort. Keep in mind this was the first iteration of the course with Dr. Taylor and she seemed to be trying her best. However, I hope there will be improvements in future years, as I did not enjoy the course.

My time breakdown for each assignment: https://imgur.com/a/GogQ95v

Personally, I really disliked this course and found the material (a) completely non-intuitive and (b) painfully boring. There are weekly quizzes on either Tuesday or Thursday, at random (an effort to make students go to class). The quizzes are just HW problems. HW is graded for completion, which would be amazing if not for the fact that this class has HW only approx. 15% of the grade, and there are two closed-book exams. Why these exams are closed-book, I have no clue. It would be "Pareto efficient" if these exams were open-book. Additionally, although the math in this class is not challenging, the interpretation of it is very confusing - which makes it very hard to know why you're doing the steps you do.

Fall Ec11 with Prof. Taylor is great! She teaches the class really well and the coursework is super manageable and easy to keep up with.

Fine class. I took it on P/F. Homeworks were super easy, especially if you scroll through the textbooks for a bit. Exams were closed note, but not too hard, and some of the content on them was taken directly from lecture slides, so if you just study for a few hours they are a breeze. Weekly quizzes, I guess as a way to encourage attendance, so that was kind of annoying.

Ec 11 in the fall is taught by different instructors each year and the class can be a lot harder based on this. I'd suggest you look into the syllabus before committing to the course if you decide to take it in the fall.

Take it on P/F or the second term when the instructor is different.