

Math/Econ 108: Quantitative Thinking for Policy Analysis

Macalester College

Department of Math and Computer Science & Department of Economics

Fall 2008 T-TH 8:00-9:30 a.m.

Professor David Bressoud

Olin-Rice 125

Office Hours: You can usually find me in my office between 1 and 5 p.m.

You can make an appointment to guarantee I'll be there, or just stop by.

Office Phone: 696-6559

email: bressoud@macalester.edu

Overview: This course offers you an overview of how data are generated, analyzed, and used in the context of public policy. The main goal of this course is to help you become familiar with basic concepts in quantitative analysis and to help you critically interpret quantitative information in the popular media.

Course Texts: Best, Joel *Damned Lies and Statistics* (DLS) and *More Damned Lies and Statistics* (MDLS) and Gigerenzer, Gerd *Calculated Risks*. Other handouts and readings will supplement the texts.

Course Website: The syllabus and all materials for this course are on the *Moodle* site Quantitative Thinking, Econ-108-01.

Teaching Assistants: Ernesto Queiros Nunes. Email: equeirosnunes@macalester.edu.
Phone: 651-696-7178

Grading: The course consists of twelve (12) homework assignments due on Tuesday of most weeks, two (2) exams, and a research project (see separate handout on the research project). The homework assignments are collectively worth 35%. Both the midterm and final exam are each worth 15%. The final exam will be cumulative. The project is worth 30%. The remaining 5% is for class participation, which will be important in this class. The homework assignments and pieces of the research project are due at the beginning of the class day indicated. Late assignments will be penalized. Except for the final project report, you will lose 10% of your grade if it arrives after 8:30 am on the day it is due, an additional 10% if it is not in by 5:00 pm on the day it is due, and an additional 10% for each additional day it is late after that. The final project report will not be accepted after 5:00 pm on Thursday, December 20.

Cheating: Don't even THINK of cheating in this class. If you feel the need to cheat, come see me in advance and I will try to find other ways to help you succeed in this class. If I catch you cheating, I will devote considerable amounts of time to get you removed from Macalester. Even if you do not get expelled, I can promise you an "F" for the course and months and months of misery. Just say NO.

Holidays and Missed Exams: The class itinerary is included with this syllabus. Please check it now for any conflicting religious holidays. If you have a conflict, you **MUST** see me at least one week in advance to get an excused absence. The **ONLY** other legitimate excuse for a missed exam is a verifiable medical emergency. No make-up exams will be given that are not scheduled at least one week before the scheduled exam time. In the event of an excused missed exam, the average of the other exams will serve as the grade of the missed exam.

Tips for Success: People who miss class get lower grades because I make exams from my lectures and not the textbook. Therefore, it is an excellent idea to never miss class. Readings are all listed and should be read **BEFORE** class. Read actively and write down questions. Visit me and/or the TA to make sure you are clear on ideas presented in class. Problems at the end of each chapter are often very relevant and helpful: practice these to prepare for exams. You should also check your email at least twice a week for class information.

Compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Students who may need special consideration because of any sort of disability should make an appointment to see me. Please anticipate problems and talk to me well in advance of exams.