

# ECO 407

## Competing Views in Macroeconomic Theory and Policy

### Critical Reviews – General Writing Instructions

#### **Purpose**

To be successful in the workforce and as an economist, you will need to be able to critically evaluate economic arguments and convey your reasoning to a general audience in writing. The assignments in this class will help you develop these skills. You will need to demonstrate your ability to apply economic concepts and tools to different, more open ended contexts. This also helps you develop your ability to apply and to view events through the lens of economics.

#### ***What does it mean to be critical in Economics?***

Critical examination involves a few steps. First, translating a written argument into a form that can be analyzed using the tools you have learned in class or in other courses. The next step is to use these tools to critically examine the argument being made. *Analysis involves doing more than merely paraphrasing the textbook, class notes or using jargon. It involves things like identifying which model/tool is appropriate for this context, checking to see if the assumptions required are satisfied, identifying any changes in circumstances and working through the predictions, etc.* You need to be able to compare your analysis with the author's arguments and be able to articulate any differences or similarities in a precise manner. The final step is translating all of this back into clear language that readers can easily understand.

#### **Task**

There will be two ***Critical Reviews*** and one ***Term Paper*** in this course to give you practice and opportunities to get feedback on your writing. These are ***individual*** writing assignments. ***These general instructions are for the Critical Reviews.***

For these two writing assignments you will be given an article and will be asked to critically evaluate it. You will be graded on the quality and thoroughness of your analysis. Writing skills are essential to enable you to communicate your ideas to others. Therefore, you will also be graded on the clarity, flow and overall cohesiveness of the writing in your paper.

#### ***How to structure your assignment***

1. The introduction (first paragraph) must provide some context and briefly summarize what you consider to be the main point(s) of the article. If there are many, focus on the one(s) that you will analyze in the assignment.
2. The next part should provide your analysis of the arguments of the article. Your arguments should use economic concepts you have learned in class or in other courses. Be careful to

address the appropriate audience. *Remember, narrow your focus so that your analysis can be more in-depth. That is much more important than hitting every point made in the article.*

3. Briefly draw the evaluation together in a short concluding paragraph.
4. Any reference you cite should be identified and listed at the end of the paper. They do not count toward the word limit.

### ***How to get started***

- To *evaluate* an article you need first to understand the author's arguments. Start by identifying the assumptions inherent in the argument, checking to see if the conclusions follow from these assumptions. Try to distinguish the argument from the evidence provided to support the argument.
- To do *critical* evaluation, essentially you should take apart the various steps in the argument and see if they make sense separately and as a whole. Can you use the tools learned in class or in other courses to think about the argument in another way? Check to see if the author is missing anything in his/her argument or has used some tool or method incorrectly or inappropriately. Is there evidence that contradicts their argument?
- For more detailed instructions, see the hand-out "***Where do I start? A step-by-step guide to completing your written assignment***" by Jessie Lamontagne available at: <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/gindart/stepbystepwritingassignment.pdf>.

### ***Length***

Your Critical Reflection should have about **800-1000 words** (excluding the title page and references, if any) which given the format below should be about 4-5 pages.

### ***Style***

Because you are writing for the ***general reading population***, you will need to explain your arguments in a way that someone who has some understanding of basic economic concepts, but not detailed knowledge, can understand it.

Refer to the "***Standard Documentation Formats***" for advice on how to write up your references. It is available at: <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/gindart/DOCUMENTATION%2006%20July18.pdf>. My personal preference is for the use of "APA System: Parenthetical Author-Date References" style.

### ***How to format your assignment***

- Your assignment should be typed, double spaced and have a font size of at least 12 points.
- Put the word count of your assignment in parentheses at the end. For example, "(950 words)".
- The title page should have your full name, student id number and the class information (i.e. ECO 407, Summer 2016).
- The assignment should be either a Word or pdf document.