Due dates:
- Paper topics are due Wednesday, November 6.
- Papers are due Monday, November 25.

Purpose. Your assignment is to write a short paper of at least 2000 words on a topic related to macroeconomics. This writing assignment has several purposes:

▷ This assignment provides an opportunity for you to learn something about macroeconomics “on your own,” outside the scope of a classroom lecture. You may want to investigate in greater detail a topic that we have not had the opportunity to discuss in class. Keep in mind that this paper is not your senior thesis. I recommend that you keep it simple. Your job is to learn something about a topic related to macroeconomics; to synthesize what you’ve learned; to organize some subset of what you’ve learned into a logical and coherent outline; and finally, to use your outline as the basis for a paper.

▷ This assignment should also contribute to the development of your writing skills by providing an opportunity for you to write and to read. (Research on the teaching of writing indicates that reading develops writing ability.) Writing skills are a key ingredient in the recipe for academic success. Writing skills are also important to many potential employers.

▷ This assignment should enhance and expand upon what you learn in the classroom and from your text. Ex-ante, students often report that they prefer to avoid writing assignments. Ex-post, students often tell me that they found the benefits of a writing assignment well worth the costs.

How to Proceed. This is a short paper assignment. You therefore need to define your topic clearly and limit its scope appropriately. Short papers are an exercise in synthesizing information. You will have to familiarize yourself with issues and arguments, and then synthesize them carefully.

Step 1. Pick a topic of interest.
Step 2. Do some preliminary research to see what sort of information you can find on your topic. If your search for information is not fruitful, you should either (1) change topics or (2) come see me for guidance.
Step 3. Read some of the things you came across in your preliminary research and begin to define the relevant issues associated with your topic.
Step 4. Formulate a clear outline for your paper.
Step 5. Once you have an outline, you’re ready to begin writing.

There are any number of forms your paper may take, depending on the topic you choose. Your topic may center around a recent current event or policy issue. Alternatively, your topic may center around a historic event or policy. Given the normative nature of policy, most topics will involve some controversy. In such a case, your job is not to take a side. Your job is to find out what experts and other people are saying on each side of the issue and to report your findings. I.e., your paper should NOT be an opinion piece. If there’s a particular side of an issue that interests you, you are free to skew the balance of your paper in this direction. However, there are always multiples sides/views on issues of policy. If you focus on one side/view to the exclusion of others, you must at least acknowledge to the reader that you have done so.

Ground Rules. There are a number of ground rules you should keep in mind as you construct your paper.

▷ Your topic must be clearly related to macroeconomics. I am willing to be flexible in the interest of allowing you to pursue topics you are interested in. However, any topics not clearly related to
macroeconomics must be approved by me in advance. There will also be a penalty for topic changes not approved in advance.

 Whenever possible, you should frame your discussion in the context of the models/ideas we have talked about in class. I don’t want to limit you to a paper that is a strict application of something we’ve covered. However, if your topic lends itself to any of the analysis we’ve discussed in class, you should be sure to incorporate such an analysis into your paper.

 If possible, you should incorporate the use of data into your paper. Several of the homework assignments you’ve completed were designed to prepare you for this paper requirement. You have experience downloading data from the web, presenting data in the form of an informative plot, and describing salient features of such a plot in words.

 I repeat: Your paper should NOT be an opinion piece. Your opinions are important and relevant. However, this paper is not the place to express them. (The extra credit letter to the editor option described in the syllabus is an outlet for that sort of thing if you’re interested.)

 Quality of writing matters. Your grade will be determined in part by the overall quality of your writing, and you will be penalized for grammar and spelling errors. If your writing skills are weak, I recommend that you utilize the writing center, or have a friend who is a good writer read your paper and give you comments.

 The outline and construction of your paper must be ordered and logical. Once you have a clear outline in hand, the actual writing of your paper should be fairly easy.

 Format. Your paper should include the following items in the following order:

 1. Cover sheet. Include a cover sheet with the title of your paper and your name.
 2. Outline. Include a copy of your outline on a separate page.
 3. Body. The body of your paper should be double spaced, with a 12pt easy to read font, and with 1 inch margins. Please include outline headings in the body of your paper. The body of your paper should be at least 2000 words long.
 4. References. Use Harvard referencing style for your reference page and for citations in the body of your paper. For anyone unfamiliar with Harvard referencing style, please see the link on my web page for information.
 5. Reference summary. Following your reference page, include a separate page with a “reference summary.” For each reference write a brief paragraph, in your own words, that summarizes who/what the reference is. For example, if you have cited an economist, politician, or other individual, provide a brief bio that includes relevant information on the individual’s background for the reader. If you have cited a think-tank or other organization, provide a paragraph that indicates the mission and/or perspective (right-wing, liberal, etc.) of the institution.
 6. Graphs. Graphs, charts, or other figures should be included last.

 Plagiarism and Your Job. Academic integrity is an integral part of the learning process. Without it, true learning cannot take place. All students will be required to submit their papers to Turnitin.com - an online plagiarism detection service that UMBC subscribes to. I will show you how to submit your papers to the service in class. Cases of plagiarism will be penalized in accordance with UMBC’s policies governing academic misconduct. Possible penalties include failure for the assignment, lowering of the course grade, failure for the course, and expulsion from the university. As Bill Taylor points out (see his letter to students: http://www.academicintegrity.org/pdf/Letter_To_My_Students.pdf), “the accumulation of knowledge is a shared enterprise.” I.e., the majority of the learning and discovery that we engage in does not entail original thought. We learn and discover the things that those before us have learned and discovered. The process is quicker and easier for us because the original contributions (the hard parts), have been handed down. Your
job, in writing this paper, is not to do truly original research. Your job is to research the work of others. Your original contribution is to organize the facts you find and the thoughts and ideas of others into a coherent and logical (and hopefully interesting) presentation. Thus, there is no reason to hide the fact that you're drawing from the work of others. Quite to the contrary, by citing your sources, you demonstrate to me that you have done the assignment.

All students are assumed to know and understand what constitutes plagiarism. For anyone interested, there is a link on my web page to some resources designed to educate people about what constitutes plagiarism. I also encourage you to visit UMBC’s academic integrity web site at http://www.umbc.edu/integrity/.

**Tips.** A very incomplete list of writing tips.

- Proof-read, proof-read, proof-read. And do it out-loud. You will be penalized for typos and grammatical errors that distract the reader.
- Keep your verb tense consistent.
- Use active voice whenever possible.
- Don’t use the word “this” without a qualifier. For example, instead of writing “This is a good thing.” Write, “This assignment is a good thing.”
- Use parallel construction. For example, don’t use the phrase “on the other hand,” if you haven’t previously used the phrase “on the one hand.”
- Avoid overly long or short sentences. If a sentence is more than 3 lines long, it should probably be divided into two or more sentences.
- Use “that” instead of “which” when possible.
WEB PAGE GUIDELINES AND COMMENTS

Due dates:
Web page topics and “shells” are due Wednesday, November 6.
Web pages are due Wednesday, November 20.

Purpose. Your assignment is to build a home page for the world wide web. Your page should include links to other web sites related to a macroeconomic topic. This assignment has several purposes:

▷ The web is a valuable source of information. However, some skill is required to utilize the web fully as a resource. This assignment will provide you with an opportunity to practice finding and using information on the web. We have visited a number of web sites in class over the course of the semester. Thus, you are already familiar with several web sites that contain useful information with respect to the economy.

▷ UMBC is committed to ensuring “technological fluency” in its graduates. This assignment contributes to this objective by providing students with the opportunity to utilize the web and to create and publish a web page.

▷ Ex-ante, students who have never been asked to create a web page often object to this assignment. Ex-post, these same students often report the web page assignment was the best learning experience of the course. It is my hope that this assignment provides an opportunity for students learn about economics in a fun, interesting, and “non-traditional” way.

Ground Rules. There are a number of ground rules you should keep in mind as you construct your web page.

▷ Your web page must have a theme or topic. On your page, include links to a minimum of six active sites related to your topic. If you find some interesting pages that are not directly related to your topic, feel free to post them. Keep in mind though, that I do not want a list of six unrelated sites.

▷ For each link, post a brief paragraph that describes the content of the linked site and indicates why the site is of interest.

▷ I encourage you to exploit your comparative advantage on this assignment. If web page design is not your strong suit, make an extra effort with regard to the content of your page - find more than six links and/or make an extra effort in describing the pages you’ve linked to.

▷ Remember that this assignment is intended to introduce you to a few of the many interesting economics-related sites on the internet, as well as to increase your interest in economics. It is not intended to be an exercise in frustration. If you run into trouble learning how to build and publish a page, come see me. I’m happy to help.