COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will learn about the economic approach of analyzing issues related to the family and the society, which are nonetheless topics in other disciplines as well. We use basic economic models to explain the marriage market, fertility choice, decision makings of families in terms of human capital accumulation, and intergenerational mobility. The economic approach to human behavior, both theoretical and empirical, can also be applied to examine parental choice of primary school, interaction of youths across socioeconomic groups, work-family balance, coping strategies of the sandwiched generation, impact on and responses by families and the government to an aging population, and impact of changing social attitudes on families.

Specific topics will be incorporated or will even replace some of the above given the experiential nature of the course; in fact, the topics to be investigated as group projects will be jointly formulated by the students, the faculty, and the partners based on issues and problems they are facing currently. As the SMU-X course is experiential in nature, the coverage may vary according to the needs and interests of the partners at the time the course is offered.

Students will conduct literature review, develop their research questions in consultation with the faculty and partners, gather data from the public domain or provided by the partners, and analyze the data using qualitative and quantitative methods. If feasible and appropriate, they may conduct experiments, design survey questionnaire, conduct focus group discussions, or write an opinion piece for the newspaper.

Students are expected to submit a group project proposal (Week 6, for example), to present a progress report (Week 9, for example), and to complete a final report and presentation (Week 12), to be graded by the faculty and partners. Quantitative and qualitative skills are needed in the group projects. As confidential data may be used, partners may be involved in the selection (interviews) of students.

IMPORTANT NOTE

As partners are likely government agencies, and due to the nature of research project involving sensitive data, only Singapore Citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents may apply or bid for this course.

Previous project groups had been invited to present their findings to a Cabinet Minister, and the CEO of the agency.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course enables students to learn from and interact with the partners on real-world issues, problems, and policies related to the family and the society at large, especially for the case of Singapore. Students start with some economic theories, and will need to extend quickly to other disciplines such as sociology, social work, psychology, law, and politics, and hence inter-disciplinary in nature. The topics to be covered are experiential and evolving, according to the current issues or challenges faced by the partners. In
essence, students learn not just theories, but also have an opportunity to contribute in actual research and practices of the partners.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT ECON240

“That working with actual clients in a real working context is very different from economic theories. We were taught that there are many models that cannot be effectively brought over. The conduct of our secondary research against our primary research taught us the differences between the two.”

“I felt that partly because of the ambiguous expectations, self-guided and exploratory approach of the course, it has pushed me to think deeper, consider practical constraints and also more like a researcher. I had the chance to work on my research skills and also conduct some fieldwork, which is less common in other modules. Working with external partners also gave us a peek into perspectives and working styles in the working world, which added much value to the coursework.”

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Project proposal and presentation : 10%
Project progress report and presentation : 10%
Project final report and presentation : 35%
Personal reflection on learning : 5%
Peer evaluation within team : 5%
Class Participation: Discussions, Comments : 5%
Final Examination : 30%
Total : 100%

Faculty have been instructed not to reuse questions verbatim from past year papers or published test banks, for the graded continuous assessments and examinations in this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student’s own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at http://www.smuscd.org/resources.html.

ACCESSIBILITY

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If students anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let the instructor know immediately. Students are also welcome to contact the university’s disability services team if they have questions or concerns about academic provisions: included@smu.edu.sg.

Please be aware that the accessible tables in the seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (EPTL)

Where there is an emergency that makes it infeasible to have classes on campus, classes will be conducted online via WebEx, with no disruption to the schedule. To familiarise students with the WebEx platform, part of this course may be conducted online. The instructor will inform students of which classes, if any, will be conducted as part of this EPTL initiative.
**CLASS TIMINGS**

Weekly 3-hr seminars or consultations, **Wednesdays 12pm**, with faculty and industrial partner; the first few, say five, weeks will cover the relevant topics, theories and empirics, introducing the students to the projects with the industrial partners.

**RECOMMENDED TEXT AND READINGS**

The tentative reading list is given in the following tentative weekly lesson plan. The list will be reviewed. **PROPOSED WEEKLY LESSON PLAN (Wednesdays 12-3.15pm @ SOE SR ??)**

(Subject to changes based on feedback by partners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1/9</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to Family Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2/16</strong></td>
<td>Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, Experiment, Policy Evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1/9**

**Partners share unresolved issues and problems before Week 1, and define available data for analysis. Faculty, partners, and students discuss potential project topics.**

Reference Textbooks:

Lecture Readings:

Optional/Reference:

**2/16**

**Students contact partners, start literature review, and formulate project questions.**

**Correspondence with partners for feedback.**

Lecture Readings:

Optional/Reference:
- HMF Part 1 “Theoretical and methodological issues”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Policies and Families

(We may pick a day/night for WebEx; e materials and e consultations; SMU RO has fixed 16/2 as makeup class, a Saturday)

**Students refine group project proposals.**

**Lecture Readings:**


**Optional/Reference:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Policies and Families (We may pick a day/night for WebEx; e materials and e consultations; SMU RO has fixed 16/2 as makeup class, a Saturday) <strong>Students refine group project proposals.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6 | **Lecture Readings:**

**Optional/Reference:**

| 7 | **Comments for other Project Teams, to be uploaded by 18 Feb 2019, Monday, 5pm.**
**Further literature review, collection/compilation of data, preliminary analysis, onsite/consultation with supervisor and faculty**
**Data include those defined and provided by partners, as mentioned in Week 1, if available; desensitized and anonymous data will be used, with formal agreement signed. Data may include those in the public domain, or gathered by students themselves.**
**Students may propose and design a survey to collect data, for current or future projects for the benefits of partners.** | 6/3 8 Recess |
| 9 | **Comments for other Project Teams, to be uploaded by 15 Mar 2019, Friday, 5pm.**
**Preparation of Progress Report and Presentation**
**Continued consultation with faculty, TAs, and partners** | 6/3 8 Recess |
| 10 | **Progress Report/Presentation to Partners and Faculty**
**Venue: SMU** | 13/3 8 Recess |
<p>| 11 | Project Report Writing | 20/3 8 Recess |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 27/3</td>
<td>Project Presentations and Final Report Submissions to and Graded by <strong>Partners</strong> and Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Venue:</strong> SMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 3/4</td>
<td>Review Lecture for Final Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Self and Peer Evaluation:</strong> Upload by 5 Apr 2019, 5pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Personal Reflection on Learning:</strong> Upload by 5 Apr 2019, 5pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Self-Revision Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 ??</td>
<td>Final Exam, ??, ?? to ?? (To be announced by Registrar's Office)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>