ECON 151  
International Economics Seminar  
Swarthmore College, Fall 2015

**Professor** Tao Wang  
**Meetings:** TH 7-11.30pm  
**Office Hours:** T 1-3pm & by appt.

twang1@swarthmore.edu  
Kohlberg 218  
Kohlberg 214, x6139

**Goals and Expectations**

This double-credit Honors seminar studies important theories in the analysis of international trade and international finance. Though the focus of the seminars and the readings is often on the theoretical analysis, the objective is to apply the theories to real-world problems.

Upon completion of the seminar, the students are expected to:

- be knowledgeable about the current global economy and resources for international data;
- be capable of reading academic papers in the field of international economics in a critical way;
- be familiar with basic theories of international economics and able to use these theories to analyze economic events and policies;
- be able to conduct basic independent research on international economic topics using the tools, skills and resources acquired.

**Readings**

**Texts**


In both textbooks there are Chapter Appendices and Mathematical Supplements. Generally, the Appendices are required and the Supplements are optional. For those considering graduate study in economics, the Supplements are recommended.

**Other Reading**

In addition to the texts, a few articles will generally be assigned each week. These will usually be posted on the course web page on Moodle.

**Advanced Texts**

Feenstra, Robert, *Advanced International Trade*.

Bhagwati, Jagdish and Srinivasan, T.N.*Lectures on International Trade.*

**Data Sources**

Useful summaries of international economic developments in the recent past are:
IMF *World Economic Outlook*, annual, (for a global overview)
OECD *Economic Outlook*, semi-annual (for developed countries)
World Bank, *World Development Report*, annual (for developing countries). These organizations also have Web sites with lots of free information.

International statistics on individual countries can be obtained from the IMF’s *International Financial Statistics (IFS)*, and World Bank’s *World Development Indicators (WDI).* These can be accessed online through TRIPOD.

**Library Resources**

The library has a research guide for a previous version of this seminar, [http://libguides.brynmawr.edu/econ151](http://libguides.brynmawr.edu/econ151), which has links to a variety of resources that are useful for the course. It will be a good starting point for you when start to prepare your papers.

This web page was created by Social Science Librarian Sarah Elichko, who is very helpful if you need assistance in finding data or other academic resources.

**Requirements**

All seminar participants are expected to have read the *required readings.* Other readings will be for the papers and is optional except for the paper writers. Additionally, you are encouraged to keep up with current developments in the world economy, by reading various newspapers and magazines.

**Seminar Papers**

Each student will write 3 papers, one on international trade, one on international macroeconomics, and one country study, which incorporates both micro- and macroeconomic aspects. One of the three papers must be turned into a term paper at the end of the semester (see below). Some suggested reading is provided for each topic. Students are encouraged to find other sources as well, especially for the empirical topics. For country study papers as well as those covering policy issues, try to include any recent important developments. You may want to consult with the professor before writing your papers.
Seminar papers should be roughly 1500-2000 words, one and a half-spaced. It’s a plus to include graphics and tables of your own construction but copies from reference sources are OK. The papers should be concise and synthetic so other students can read quickly and obtain an understanding of the basic issues discussed in the paper.

**Papers are due by 7 P.M. the day before the seminar.** Please send your paper by email to the group. If the paper is late please send out an email to everyone informing us when the paper will be available.

It is important that you read each others’ papers so that we can have a good discussion.

Powerpoint presentations of the papers, particularly the country study papers, can be helpful and is encouraged.

**Country Study Papers**

The purpose of the country study papers is to apply the concepts of the seminar to a particular case and to give us another perspective on developments in the world economy. The country study paper will vary with the nature of the country, but here are some general guidelines as to what to include.

a. General Information. Situate the country in terms of its level of development, size, political system, etc.

b. The main features of its international trade and payments, e.g., the composition of exports and imports, the pattern of the current account balance, capital flows, and international reserves.

c. Exchange-rate policies and developments.

d. Main elements of trade policy.

e. Monetary and fiscal policies.

f. Macroeconomic performance (growth, inflation, and unemployment).

You should also include more detail on a special topic, depending on the country, e.g., the Euro for Germany or Greece, the default on foreign debt for Argentina, NAFTA for Mexico, the Asian crisis for Thailand, exports of services for India, and the role of FDI and exports of manufactured goods for China.
It is important to try to apply the relevant theory in analyzing your country. This is particularly the case if you use your country paper as your term paper. This does not have to involve formal models but rather awareness and application of relevant concepts.

**Final Term Paper**

**Due Date:** Final paper is due at the end of the final exam period.

**Length:** about 15 pages of text 12-point font, double-spaced, plus tables, charts for a total of some 20 pages. It can be a bit longer or shorter depending on the topic and how you approach it.

Feedback to your seminar papers will be provided. If you do a good job on the first draft, it should not require a great deal more work. Respond to my comments and do a little more research as needed.

**Grading Criteria.** In addition to the quality of your research and analysis, I consider how well the paper is written and organized for this final version.

**Avoid Plagiarism.** Make sure it is written in your own words. That is, do not copy or too closely paraphrase from your sources. Also make sure your ideas are properly referenced and others' work is not presented as your own. You do not need footnotes just for references but put author and year in parentheses following the sentence or paragraph from which it is derived. For example you can cite Milton Friedman's 1953 article as (Friedman, 1953) and then have it in the bibliography at the end of the paper.

**Problem Sets**

Selected previous Honors exam questions are assigned each week as problem sets. These problem sets are not graded. Students are encouraged to work out the problems collaboratively. For each problem set, one student will be assigned to aggregate the work of all students and prepare a solution. Selected problems will be discussed in the seminar.

**Current Events**

Students are encouraged to keep up to date with current developments in the global economy. You may look for the relevant sections of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, and/or *The Economist* magazine. Each week one student will be responsible for a briefing on the key events in international economics and lead a short discussion in connection to the seminar material.
Final Exam

There will be a final written exam administered during the final exams period. The exam will be similar to an Honors exam. The exam is closed book.

Grading

The grade for the seminar will be based on (roughly):

- Seminar Participation (including papers, problem sets, presentations) 50%
- Final Term Paper 20%
- Final Exam 30%

Outline of the Seminar and Paper Topics (by week)

Part I. Introduction

1. Introduction to international trade and international macroeconomics

2. Comparative Advantage and the Gains from Trade
   - Is free trade better than no trade? In what sense does society gain from trade?
   - The Ricardian model with a continuum of goods
   - International labor standards and trade

3. Inter-temporal Trade; The Balance of Payments
   - Oil-Price Shocks and the Balance of Payments.
   - Is The US Current Account Deficit Sustainable?
   - Is China’s Currency Undervalued?

Part I. International Trade

4. Classical and Neoclassical Theories of Trade
   - Technological progress in the Heckscher-Ohlin model
   - International trade and US wages
   - Empirical tests of the neoclassical models of international trade
5. Imperfect Competition; Firms in International Trade
   • How can intra-industry trade in manufactures be explained?
   • Intellectual property rights in the global economy
   • Heterogeneous firms and trade
   • The Gravity model and its empirical application

6. Trade Policy and the Political Economy of Trade Policy
   • Interest-group politics and trade policy
   • The political economy of anti-dumping policies

7. Economic Integration; Factor Movements
   • Empirical analysis of the determinants of FDI
   • Outsourcing and its welfare implications
   • Multinational firms
   • Economics of immigration and emigration
   • Effects of immigration on U.S. workers
   • Business networks in International trade
   • The effects of the WTO on trade
   • Discuss the arguments for and against a Free Trade Agreement (MERCOSUR, NAFTA, TPP, etc.)
   • Trade cost; transportation cost

8. Trade, Growth and Development
   • Trade and the environment; The Pollution Haven Hypothesis
   • Trade and climate change
   • The East Asian "miracle"
   • FDI and development; Knowledge spillover
   • Openness, growth, and poverty
   • The developing countries and the WTO
   • Trade in services

Part II. Macroeconomics: International Finance

9. Exchange-Rate Determination in the Short and Long Runs
   • Empirical evidence on exchange-rate models
   • Purchasing Power Parity
   • Burgernomics – the Big Mac index

10. Macroeconomic Policy Under Fixed and Flexible Exchange Rates
11. Macroeconomic Interdependence and the International Monetary System
   • What are the gains from macro policy coordination?
   • Is Europe an optimum currency area? Does the current crisis reveal the underlying weaknesses of European monetary union?
   • Currency unions and trade: empirical evidence

12. International Financial Markets
   • Fundamentals and technical traders in exchange rate determination
   • How integrated are international financial markets?
   • Are capital controls a bad idea?
   • Puzzles in international macroeconomics
   • Offshore financial centers, tax evasion and money laundering

13. International Macroeconomics and the Developing Countries
   • The Asian financial crisis
   • Economic reform in the transition economies
   • Reform of the IMF and the World Bank
   • Dollarization, currency boards and other solutions to exchange-rate dilemmas in developing countries.
   • Bankruptcy arrangements for sovereign debt
   • Debt relief
   • Lessons from the history of financial crises

This syllabus is subject to revisions. Please check the seminar’s Moodle page for the up-to-date version.