ECON 492 – Senior Seminar, Section 6
Fall 2020 – Analyzing Denver’s National Western Center as a Bridge Across Colorado’s Rural/Urban Divide

Economics can be useful. Yet in the crunch to understand t-statistics, elasticities, and exchange rates, this fact can often get lost. The final course in the economics program is therefore designed to apply your economics toolbox to the challenges and opportunities facing both Colorado and the rest of the nation. Colorado’s economy has long been among the most dynamic in the country, due in large part to the state’s mix of highly productive and amenity-rich rural areas and its innovative, attractive urban corridor. But Colorado, like much of the country, is experiencing uneven growth. Rapid urban growth is a key driver of the state’s economic expansion, as the Front Range in particular benefits from strong inflows of educated, creative workers. But this same growth has put upwards pressure on housing prices, led to infrastructure congestion, and created a more skill-intensive labor market.

Colorado’s rural areas also face a mix of opportunities and challenges. The state’s agricultural sector is among the most productive in the country, and is also highly diverse, comprising not only crop and livestock production but also substantial employment in marketing, wholesale, and innovative research in crop and animal sciences. Beyond agriculture, many of Colorado’s rural areas benefit from natural resource amenities. The state’s rural areas are also highly entrepreneurial, with self-employment rates substantially higher than the Front Range – and a third greater than rural areas nationwide. Yet many rural Colorado counties, especially those heavily concentrated in agriculture and natural resource extraction, have experienced declining incomes and net out-migration.

Denver’s National Western Center (NWC) redevelopment – in which CSU plays a major role – sits squarely at the intersection of these regional trends. As an urban space with an economic and cultural heritage deeply rooted in agriculture and natural resources - industries more concentrated in the state’s Eastern Plains and Western Slope - the NWC presents a unique opportunity to bridge the so-called “rural-urban divide.” Indeed, one of the main aims of the National Western Center’s development plan is to “serve as a catalyst for the New West and a new way of thinking.”

The capstone will explore innovative linkages between Denver’s urban Front Range to the entrepreneurial rural parts of the state. Colorado is uniquely placed to be a national leader in addressing the now widely-recognized gaps between rural and urban areas, and your work will play a critical role in building these bridges.

Instructor: Prof. Stephan Weiler
Prerequisites: Senior status, ECON 304, 306 and 335 (or concurrent registration)
Section 6, CRN 65364: 2:00-3:15 PM TR, Eddy 113
ECON 492 – Senior Seminar, Sections 2 & 5
Fall 2020 - *Sports Economics*

In this seminar we will examine the application of economics, particularly microeconomics, labor economics, and public finance, to sports issues, such as the relationship between player salaries and performance, salary caps and competitive balance, stadium subsidies and team success, spending and winning in college sports. Seminar participants will complete a research project (paper and presentation) that applies economic theory and uses data to explain observed behavior in sports.

Instructor: Prof. Nancy Jianakoplos  
Prerequisites: Senior status, ECON 304, 306 and 335 (or concurrent registration)  
Section 2, CRN 61936: 9:00-9:50 AM MWF, EDDY 108  
Section 5, CRN 64228: 11:00-11:50AM MWF, EDDY 118

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ECON 492 – Senior Seminar, Section 1
Fall 2020 - *Using Economics: Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Colorado*

The focus of this senior seminar will be looking at some of the economic impacts of COVID-19 in the State of Colorado. You will be utilizing the skills you have developed as economics majors to conduct research on some specific effects of the pandemic with the goal of producing a report with policy implications.

Initially we will work as a whole in terms of identifying issues, familiarizing ourselves with various data sources, and doing some background reading on what economists have been writing about the effects of the pandemic. Through this initial exploration you will choose your research topic and form working groups of 3-4 people who will be working on a given topic.

Suggestions for topics include things like the effect of the pandemic on workers in CO, perhaps differentiated by gender and race/ethnicity, the effect on small businesses, the effect of certain sectors of the state economy such as agriculture, tourism, etc., the effect on the state budget, the effect on higher education in the state…… These are just some examples of what you might be interested in.

The research reports that you create will be the result of working as part of a research team. The emphasis will be on applying and developing the knowledge and tools you have acquired in the context of a data driven research project. The process will involve formulating a research question, identifying data sources, analyzing the data, and writing a professional report. Groups will present their reports to the class at the end of the semester.

Instructor: Prof. Alexandra Bernasek  
Prerequisites: Senior status, ECON 304, 306 and 335 (or concurrent registration)  
Section 1, CRN 67434: 3:30-4:45 PM TR, CLARK C363