

Art of Econ: Incorporating the Arts through Active Learning Assignments in Principles Courses

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that, at the principles level, economics education relies predominantly on lectures for teaching. Introducing differentiated teaching by leveraging active learning provides a way for economics educators to increase students overall understanding and to assess competency at a higher level. In this paper, we provide instructors with a range of active learning assignments with relatively low costs for all participants. These assignments utilize a variety of economics-themed creative projects, which require students to determine which information is essential, use economics language clearly and precisely, and create deliverables that engage the audience with classroom material using an innovative approach.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, economics educators have had a renewed interest in incorporating new and innovative teaching methods that go beyond the traditional lecture based model. Although instructors of economics continue to rely heavily on traditional lectures, there is a growing movement towards teaching techniques that engage students and improve learning outcomes (Harter, Becker and Watts, 1999). Cooperative learning, active learning and project-based learning have received attention for their ability to increase student learning.³ Active learning provides a pathway for economics educators to differentiate their teaching methods, increase the depth of learning for their students, and assess a higher level of understanding of economics concepts.

Introducing new projects can be costly to the instructor or students (sometimes both) and may reduce the willingness of educators to differentiate their teaching methods. To help reduce the cost of introducing differentiated projects into their courses, we supply economics educators with a tool-box of lower cost approaches to engage students. These projects will help instructors introduce differentiated learning into their courses, building upon the foundation of active learning and innovative teaching methods. By incorporating differentiated learning techniques, faculty can create a more inclusive learning environment, addressing the needs of all students by varying the method of assessment. Students that traditionally underperform on multiple-choice exams are able to express their knowledge of economics content in a different context.⁴ We specifically introduce fun, creative and artistic assessment methods that are the least costly, in both time and money, for both instructors and their students.⁵

An additional motivation for this paper is the hope to increase diversity in students majoring in economics. Siegfried (2010) finds that there has been a decline in economics degrees awarded and this may be attributed to female students being less likely to major in economics. Females account for 58.5% of all undergraduate degrees awarded, but in contrast women earn only 31% of degrees in economics. In addition,

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due to its analytical structure, it is evident that interest and success in economics is often a function of personality type (Ziegert 2000). Stowe (2010) suggests that changing the instructional method may attract different personality profiles to the field of economics. Since researchers agree that females have different learning styles relative to males (Lage and Treglia 1998) and that diversifying the teaching methods help attract a more diverse student body, we argue that it is also important to implement differentiated learning methods to both enhance student learning and to attract a greater number of females, as well as a variety of personality types, to the study of economics.

Literature Review

We provide plenty of support for instructors to adopt differentiated pedagogy methods. We focus our literature review on the importance of active learning and how the use of arts in economics has evolved over time. Art is defined as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination that can be branched into creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance. There has been an increased movement towards adopting active learning techniques that incorporate art in economics classrooms. To help students reach a higher level of understanding, Hoyt (2003) advocates for the use of “learning hooks” to help students better understand and grasp economic content. Hoyt (2003) suggests that educators diversify their teaching approach and utilize more active learning techniques, incorporate more relevant examples and integrate an interdisciplinary approach to teaching.

The use of art projects in the principles of economics classroom is a relatively new pedagogical tool that has recently received attention. Most of the attention has been focused on the use of literature in the economics classroom (Cotti and Johnson 2012; Hartley 2001; Watts 2002). In a recent project, Niemen, Furnagiev and Ward (2015), introduce <www.econjourney.com>. The website is a pilot program that allows students to create and write a story about a world that faces scarcity. Additionally, Vachris and Bohanon (2012) advocate for the use of literature in upper division labor economics courses. While Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000) use memorable and interesting stories to help students’ retention of the course material. The use of literature has progressed towards the use of Great Books of Western Civilization (Hartley 2001), historical novels (Cotti and Johnson 2012) and short stories (Ruder 2006) in economics classrooms. This transition from passive to active learning helps students retain more information versus traditional lecture-based models.

Other forms of art that have been suggested as good sources for active learning include the use of music (Holder et al 2015; McClough and Heinfeldt, J. 2012; Tinari and Khandke 2000), Paintings (Watts and Christopher, 2012). and poetry (Becker et al. 2006; Bohanon 2012; Ziliak 2009). Recently, there has been a movement towards a more visual form of art to engage economics students. These include, but are not limited to, the use of clips from cinema, movies, or film (Leet and Houser 2003; Mateer and Herman 2008; Sexton 2006), television shows (Acchiardo et al. 2014; Considine 2006; Hall 2005; Kuester et al. 2014; Luccasen et al. 2011; Mateer et al. 2011; Tierney et al. 2015), sports shows (Al-Bahrani and Patel 2015b)⁶, animated cartoons (Luccasen et. al 2011), internet-based cartoons (Engel et al. 2014) and photography (Al-Bahrani et al. 2016).

Active learning techniques should help students reach this higher level of learning and students with a deeper understanding of content should have “the ability to think independently to determine necessary information, to provide persuasive substantiation of claims, to organize thoughts clearly, and to use precise, correct and effective language” (Santos and Lavin 2004). The use of writing in economics courses is a popular method to assess student learning,⁷ especially deeper learning (Crowe and Youga 1986). Davis (2015) provides theoretical support for the use of creative arts in economics education while providing examples of the use of poetry in her classroom. Using cognitive and neuroscience literature, the author suggests that creative art projects could lead to a more memorable educational experience, engage more students, and increase economics literacy. However, like Buckles and Seigfried (2006) suggested, written

³ See Buckles, Hoyt, and Imazeki 2012; Deslauriers, Schelew, and Weiman 2011; Goffé and Kauper 2014; Miller and Rebelein 2012.

⁴ Gorss et. al (2015) find that flipped classrooms in STEM majors help female and low-GPA students perform better.

⁵ Please note that for all these activities students may have a relatively higher time cost compared to the instructor. In some cases, instructor’s time cost can increase if they choose to be actively involved in either participating or assisting students with the activities.

⁶ Provides a detailed literature review on the use of popular media in economic classrooms.

⁷ See Brewer and Jozefowicz (2006), Chizmar and Ostrosky (1998), Greenlaw (2003), Dynan and Cate (2005) Dynan and Cate (2009), and Stowe (2010)

assessment can be time consuming to administer and also requires the grader to maintain fairness and have a great deal of judgment to ensure accuracy among the different types of answers that are submitted (Kates 2008).

The concern with the way art has been introduced in economics classrooms previously is that the projects mentioned are high stakes and high cost projects. This approach is often too costly for new instructors attempting to introduce art and creative thinking into their classrooms or for larger class sizes. Furthermore, the use of art projects can detract from covering economics content (Watts 1998). In this paper we provide instructors with low-cost active learning teaching and assessment projects. These assignments require students to create economics content by determining necessary information, organizing their thoughts clearly, and using economics language concisely. We believe that these assignments help differentiate the learning environment and lead to a more inclusive educational environment as suggested by Stowe (2010).

Examples of Active Learning Assignments

We provide several examples of assignments that can be used to break up the lecture or serve as active learning projects. These assignments rely heavily on artistic and creative expression of economic knowledge.

Learning Objectives

The purpose of these assignments is to improve literacy in the discipline by connecting economics with a variety of artistic avenues. By applying economics to events outside of a traditional classroom model, students apply the concepts, techniques, and methods of the discipline and improve their ability to connect economics with the world around them. Art of Econ assignments bring energy and excitement to the classroom by providing students with an opportunity to work with an activity of their own interest in order to gain a better understanding of the subject.

Context for Use

These activities can be used as either group or individual assignments, most can be completed either inside or outside of class and each can be assigned as homework or extra credit. In order to complete the assignments, students need access to a computer or mobile device. For assignments like Rockonomix, students will need access to a video recorder or camera. Proper instructions and resources should be shared well in advance, preferably at the beginning of the semester. We share handouts for each activity in our appendix section.

Teaching Notes

For instructors planning to adopt these assignments, it is helpful to provide clear instructions, assessment guidelines, and provide acceptable examples. For several of these activities, it is ideal to provide students with ample time over the semester to submit something that appropriately demonstrates their proficiency in understanding the economics content. Students can also be provided with checkpoints along the way to encourage them that they are on the right track and keep students focused on the learning outcomes related to the assigned work. Another suggestion is to allow the students to work in groups to enhance the learning process. This encourages students to improve their skills by learning from one another. Finally, our experience is that sharing several examples over the course of the semester as benchmarks enhances learning outcomes.⁸

⁸ Appendix 2 includes links to examples for each assignment.

Assessment

To ensure students are meeting the stated learning objectives, different outcomes may be assessed on these activities. For each assignment, we share a rubric that provides more emphasis on assessment (See Appendix 1).

In the next section, we outline several suggested assignments for implementing this unique active learning strategy. The assignments are grouped into the following categories: music/media, visual arts, physical art, digital creation, and exploring the news/current events. These assignments also vary in their level of difficulty and costs for an individual instructor and their students. Some assignments are low cost to the instructor but might be relatively more costly to the student and vice versa. To better assist instructors, we identify the level of costs for both the instructor and student. We break these active learning assignment ideas into “low” and “medium” cost categories, for both students and instructors, since some activities are clearly less involved than others. For all assignments, instructions are attached in the appendix unless otherwise noted.

Music/Media

Rockonomix - The Rockonomix assignment challenges students to bring economic concepts to life by requiring them to choose a popular song, rewrite the lyrics and make it about economics, and record a new music video parody. The songwriting and video production process gives students the opportunity to analyze what they have learned inside the classroom and then requires them to actively construct a new teaching tool, extending their reach to the highest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The Rockonomix assignment has been effectively implemented in face-to-face, hybrid and online formats covering both full-term and shortened summer semesters. Students must be comfortable with video and audio production or an alternative lyric writing assignment can be offered if a technology barrier exists. Holder et al. (2015) provides additional details, a sample rubric and guidelines for implementation.

ECON Behind the Music Media Analysis - The ECON Behind the Music Media Analysis assignment requires students to find economic concepts hidden within their favorite music by asking them to identify and analyze 3-5 economics terms that relate to their song of choice. A simplified assignment can assign a single song, such as Cost of Livin’ by Ronnie Dunn, to the class as a whole for an in-depth class discussion. An extension on this assignment is to have students make a pop-up style video where the original song lyrics are retained and economics-themed facts and analysis are embedded within a new music video of the song (Hall, Lawson, and Mateer 2008; Holder, Mateer & O’Roark 2015)

Visual Arts

Infographonomics – Students who enjoy the visual arts can create infographics demonstrating their understanding of economics terms and concepts. These poster-sized visualizations of data can focus on economic data such as GDP or the CPI or show off student’s knowledge of relevant course content. There are numerous web-based design sites available for making infographics, like Piktochart, or these revitalized posters can be made in PowerPoint by customizing dimensions within the program.

Video Scrapbooking – Scrapbooking has traditionally always been a means of preserving personal history or interests in an album using pictures, media, or artwork. As we are moving towards a more digital based society that is valued highly in the workforce, this idea of scrapbooking is conducted electronically. Keeping up to date with this information helps retain economics concepts better. Some of the best sources of economic information are newspapers and magazines, which are increasingly accessible online. Students will bridge the gap between economics and associated concepts through a video that streams clippings with concepts and narratives in a sequential order as the chapters are covered in class. Al-Bahrani, Dowell, and Patel (2016) provide a detailed explanation on the use of Video Scrapbooking.

St. Patrick’s Day/Valentine’s Day Card Poems - What better way to celebrate the seasons than with a holiday-themed poem utilizing terms and concepts from economics? Whether it is writing an economics-themed limerick or love sonnet, or even attempting an economics haiku, this assignment will inspire

students to draw on their language arts experience and explore the nuances of economics jargon. We suggest that students make holiday cards to display their poem, but poetry can also be submitted on its own.

Physical Art

Halloween Costumes, Pumpkin Carving, Easter Eggs - Holiday themed economics projects are not limited to literary assignments. Your hands-on learners will appreciate exploring their tactile understanding of economics by participating in an economics-themed Halloween costume contest, carving economics terms into pumpkins, or even decorating Easter eggs to illustrate their understanding of economics. These tactile projects allow students to make a concrete illustration of economics to help them remember concepts and terms on test day.

Dismal Art Project - You can let your students imagination soar by assigning the Dismal Art Project which allows for any type of economics-themed art, large or small, to be submitted along with an accompanying explanation of the work of art and the economic concepts being portrayed. This work of art can take the form of cartoons, drawings, paintings, infographics, fabric-based work such as an economics t-shirt or jersey, sculptures and more. The only limitation is your student's imagination and their ability to tie their work to an existing economics term or concept.

Digital Creation

Know-It-All Project - Giving students the freedom to pursue a topic of interest within the scope of economics is the key to the Know-it-All project. This research project allows your students become an expert in a subject of their own choosing, and the only limitation is that they need to explain the economics behind their topic to their peers in a unique and creative way. Whether they are exploring the economics behind a career in the NBA, why students cheat, how millennials spend their disposable income, or the economics of Walmart, students are taking ownership of their understanding of economics through the use of project-based learning.

Everyday ECON, ECON Selfies and ECON Memes - A picture is worth a thousand words, and an economics-themed picture can be worth a lot of points. Task your students with taking a photograph of economics in the world around them. They can illustrate an economics concept or term with a simple picture or with an economics-themed selfie or meme. For a more detailed explanation on the use of ECONSelfie see Al-Bahrani et al. (2015).

Exploring The News/Current Events

ECON Ads and ECON Today - Let students search out economics-themed stories in print or visual media by focusing on advertising (print or commercial) or interesting news items that are related to economics. The key to this assignment is to get students to think outside of the box and see the economics that permeates the world around them. Instructors should get students started on the right track by showing interesting, relevant examples of how economics permeates the real world.

Live-Tweet an Event - When an event of national interest occurs, such as the State of the Union address, the Olympics or the Grammy Awards, encourage students to engage with their class by "live-tweeting" an event. Define a class hashtag to keep the conversation going and monitor the conversation to direct it back to economics throughout the course of the event. Al-Bahrani and Patel (2015a) provide more information on how to use Twitter, "live-tweeting", and other social media platforms to engage students.

Instructor Tips

We provide a summary of all projects in Table 1. Instructors interested in integrating the arts into their class assessment can choose from this list based on time costs to the instructor, cost to students, whether they are interested in assessment that is in class or outside of class, and finally whether the assessment is individual or group based. We believe that incorporating these new teaching tools will help increase diversity of students by making economics relevant to more students. While these assignments might attract

new students, there is always the possibility that it might dissuade the traditional economics student. Therefore we recommend that these assignments be introduced as complements rather than substitutes to traditional teaching methods.

Table 1: Summary of Assignments, Costs, and Structure

Category	Art of Econ Assignment	Professor Cost	Student Cost	Completion Location⁹	Assignment Structure¹⁰
Music/Media	Rockonomix	Low/Med	Low/Med	Outside of Class	Group
	ECON Behind the Music Media Analysis	Low/Med	Low	Inside of Class	Individual or Group
Visual Arts	Infographonomics	Low	Low	Outside or Inside of Class	Individual or Group
	Video Scrapbooking	Low/Med	Low/Med	Outside of Class	Group
	St. Patrick's Day/Valentine's Day Card Poems	Low	Low	Outside or Inside of Class	Individual
Physical Art	Halloween Costumes, Pumpkins & Easter Eggs	Low	Low	Outside of Class	Individual
	Dismal Art Project	Low/Med	Low/Med	Outside or Inside of Class	Individual or Group
Digital Creation	Know-it-All Project	Low/Med	Low/Med	Outside of Class	Individual or Group
	Everyday ECON, ECONSelfies, ECON Memes	Low	Low	Outside of Class	Individual
Exploring the News/ Current Events	ECON Ads, ECON Today	Low	Low	Outside or Inside of Class	Individual
	Live-tweeting Events	Low/Med	Low/Med	Outside of Class	Individual

⁹ The recommended completion location is flexible. For example, if listed as Outside of Class, the professor can have face-to-face in-class workdays to keep students on pace and lower their costs of trying to find a meeting time. If listed as Inside of Class, it can be moved completely to an external assignment with well-written instructions and offering samples of A-level work.

¹⁰ The recommended assignment structure of group vs. individual work is also flexible. Most assignments that are more difficult to grade or manage are listed as group as the structure to minimize costs to students and the professor. It can be adapted to an individual project in small classrooms or for courses where it makes up more of their grade.

Conclusion

As economics educators continue to adopt active learning strategies to enhance student learning, there has been an emphasis on active learning. However, incorporating active learning and differentiated teaching requires an investment of time. In this paper, we introduce and summarize several low-cost active learning assignments that provide educators with opportunities to incorporate the arts. These assignments are primarily aimed at capturing student's creativity and increase their ability to connect economics content to their own interests through a range of projects focused on music, art, popular media, and social media. We advocate for using these assignments in conjunction with the instructor's choice of assessment method to provide a more complete and encompassing differentiated assessment of student learning.

Faculty attempting to incorporate a differentiated teaching or assessment method can utilize the low-cost projects and rubrics provided. These projects are designed to create a more inclusive educational environment and attract a more diverse student body to the study of economics.

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Appendix 1: Rubric

Table 1: Adjustable Sample Rubric for all Projects

	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points	5 points
Audio/ Video Quality	Unacceptable	Barely Acceptable	Average	Meets Expectations	Goes Beyond Expectations
Description of photo, article, submission, Caption, etc	Description of concept is generally inaccurate (contains a few major errors or omissions)	Description of concept is somewhat accurate (contains a major error or omission) Description is simply a textbook definition	Accurately describes the concept(s) with only minor errors or omissions	Accurately describes concept	Accurately describes concept Description suggests nuanced understanding of concept
Economic Concepts Covered in the Submission	Describes concept(s) in own words with some accuracy Concept(s) are not tied together in any way	Accurately describes concept(s) in own words Concept(s) are not tied together in any way	Accurately describes concept(s) in own words Concepts are tied together, but only occasionally and in a superficial way	Accurately describes concept(s) in own words Concepts are often tied together, but sometimes inaccurately Connects concepts in a cohesive theme, but some inaccurate connections	Connects concepts together in a cohesive theme for the entire song. Connections are mostly accurate
Creativity	Unacceptable	Barely Acceptable	Average	Meets Expectations	Goes Beyond Expectations

Appendix 2: Active Learning Assignments Guidelines

Music

Rockonomix

The task for the Rockonomix assignment is simple: students write new lyrics to a popular hit song, record their own economics-themed music video and post their musical masterpiece to YouTube. Holder et al (2015) provides full implementation details including access to a sample assignment sheet, rubric and peer evaluations along with the availability of national and state level contests and student examples.

Examples: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6B745E4E47064D7E>

ECON Behind the Music Media Analysis

Since economics is everywhere, it is not surprising that we find economic concepts in music. For this assignment, you need to analyze a song and identify the economics themes, key concepts, or basic

economic ideas that are contained within it. Working in small groups, each group needs to complete the following:

- At least two group meetings to discuss, edit or finalize the assignment: (1) for face-to-face classes you must utilize our scheduled in-class meetings (2) for online classes your meetings may take place either face-to-face or virtually.
- After groups are formed, reserve your choice by posting the title of the song, artist and year in your discussion post title and I will approve them to avoid excessive duplication of content. NOTE: you may reserve your choice by posting a “placeholder” post with the title in the discussion board, then go back and edit your original post before the assignment deadline. Example: Group 01 - Word Crimes by Weird Al Yankovic (2013).
- The body of the discussion post must include all of the following: group number, names of all your group members, course and section number, song (artist & year), brief interpretation of the basic message of the popular song choice (1-2 sentence maximum), a numbered list of the three economics concepts, definitions, principles or theories that are explored in your group’s choice along with a brief definition in your own words and how it fits with the piece of media along with relevant supporting lyrics for each numbered concept.
- You must submit your completed peer evaluation by the assignment deadline.

Grading is based on the ability to follow instructions, the quality of your analysis, the uniqueness of the economics concepts your group found, and your explanation to the class. For classes that meet face-to-face, you will do an in-class presentation, which includes both speaking to the class as whole as well as making a visual aid (PowerPoint, Prezi, Glogster, movie, etc.). For classes that meet online you must attach a virtual presentation using any of the tools listed above or a narrated PowerPoint, SlideShare, movie, etc. - creativity matters! As always, spelling and grammar are important. You will lose points for the use of poor grammar, incorrect spelling, foul language, failure to complete the peer evaluation, or lack of participation in your group. NOTE: When referencing any explicit language, replace it with an asterisk or numbers string.

Each group always has the right to fire any group member who is not actively participating in their group. To complete this process, you must email the person who is being fired (copy me on the email) and state the reason for the firing and attach any appropriate documentation. The deadline for firing a group member is no later than one week prior to the due date.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-popecon/>

Visual Arts

Infographonomics

Your task is to create an infographic that demonstrates economics terms or concepts. This poster-sized visualization can focus on any term or concept from our lecture or your course materials. These poster-sized masterpieces can be made in PowerPoint (customize dimensions) or by using an online resource like Piktochart.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-infographonomics/>

Video Scrapbooking

Economics can be found everywhere. There is economics in newspapers, movies, literature, and most importantly in our daily lives. Keeping up to date with this information helps you retain understanding of economics concepts on test day. Some of the best sources of economic information are newspapers and magazines, many of which are accessible online. In these articles, you will find current information and opinions on nearly every topic and issue discussed in our textbook.

The goal of this project is to revive the concept of scrapbooking and use this method to make economic connections to the world around us. Scrapbooking has traditionally always been a means of preserving personal history or interests in an album using pictures, media or artwork. As we move towards a more digital based society that is highly valued in the workforce, the idea of scrapbooking will be conducted electronically.

Economics can be found everywhere. There is economics in newspapers, movies, literature, and most importantly in our daily lives. To provide yourself with a file of information on economic events, clip out and save portions of news articles and take pictures that you find interesting and informative. You can also find economics topics in movies, shows, and music. It may be useful to save them according to the chapter headings in the textbook or lectures.

When you are dealing with a particular chapter you will have clippings to supplement the information and opinions that arise in classroom work and discussion. When saving the clippings, write down a summary of how the piece is connected to the chapter theme or policy issue discussed in class in a minimum of 25 words (MAX 140 WORDS). Be sure to properly cite the source of the clipping. For example, if the clipping was found in an online newspaper, please provide the title of the article, the website retrieved from and the date.

Bring all clippings together and stream them like pictures. You should add a running narrative or, if the narrative is short enough, it can be present around the clipping. The streaming process continues with other clippings and narratives being introduced. The overall goal is to produce a video that streams the clippings with narratives in a sequential order. Thoroughness, creativity & colorfulness, organization and quality will be graded. There is no length requirement. However, there must be a clipping for at least 8 different concepts/topics discussed in class. Between each clipping, there should be enough time for the viewers to read every clipping and its narrative. Finally, you should include some nice soothing background music.

Grading Criteria	Comments	Possible Points
Articles/Images/Photos	Are there at least 8 topics/concepts discussed?	5
Article/Image/Photo explanation	Are there 25-140 word explanations associated with each article, image, and/or photo? Did you <u>explain</u> how the article/image/photo illustrates the topic or did you just list concepts?	5
Economic content: clarity in explaining policy issues using an appropriate economic concept	Can I understand the connection between the images you have chosen and the economic concepts you are using to analyze the situation? Are you using economics correctly?	5
Creativity/originality	Fun to watch? Interesting overall? Are the graphics appealing and enhance the quality?	5
Total:		20

Examples: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyUSAxdbBFRLVbKT5QbrRkrJNECSNtKx>

St. Patrick's Day/Valentine's Day Card Poems

Get into the spirit of the season by creating a holiday card with an economics-themed piece of poetry. In this assignment, you will make a simple Valentine's Day or St. Patrick's Day card along with a poem that is designed around one or more economics terms or concepts. For the St. Patrick's Day card, write a limerick, which is a funny poem with five lines and a rhyming pattern of: a-a-b-b-a. For the Valentine's Day card, any short rhyming poem will work or you may experiment with more complex forms of poetry like a haiku.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegr/econ102-econ-holiday-cards/>

Physical Art

Halloween Costumes:

Create an economics related Halloween costume and write a paragraph explaining your costume and how it is associated with economics. You should submit a photo of yourself wearing your costume in addition to your written paragraph by email or through the classroom's established social media accounts. Points will be awarded for creativity, thoughtfulness, and proper use of economics concepts. E

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegr/econ102-halloween-costumes/> and <https://www.pinterest.com/jjwooten/penn-state-economics-halloween-costume/>

Easter Eggs:

Create an economics-themed Easter egg and write a paragraph explaining what it is and how it relates to economics. Marks will be awarded for creativity, thoughtfulness, and proper usage of economics concepts. You should submit:

- A photo of your egg
- A photo of yourself with your egg
- Your paragraph of less than 200 words.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/jjwooten/easternomic-eggs/>

Pumpkin Carving:

By submitting your image, you are allowing me to use the image of your pumpkin on my professional Pinterest page to show others how awesome this class is. Create an economics-themed Halloween pumpkin and write a paragraph explaining what it is and how it relates to economics.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/jjwooten/economics-pumpkin-carving/> and <https://www.pinterest.com/dirkmateer/econ-themed-halloween-pumpkins/>

Dismal Art Project

In the medium of your choice, create your own ORIGINAL work of art that expresses a central concept or concepts in economics. Bring me your finished product and post a photo of your work to Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr or Pinterest. This assignment is worth 0-3 points.

Any artistic medium is acceptable for this project, but it is strongly suggested that you consult with me about your ideas for the project prior to beginning work. All work contained within the project should be original to you, the artist. Note: collages of newspaper items will not be accepted. Your execution of the project will determine the total points you receive and you may work alone or in small groups of no more than 6 people. If you work in a group, a peer evaluation form (posted on the learning management system website) must be turned in with your project for each group member by the due date.

The theme of your project must be clearly about ECONOMICS. There must be a GENEROUS serving of economics contained within your project and you can use terminology or ideas from our textbook, class lectures or your prior knowledge about economics. You are free to use information from any chapter in our textbooks, even if we have not covered it in class.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-dismal-art-project/>

Digital Creation

Know-It-All Project

If you want to challenge students to demonstrate their understanding of economics in a unique and innovative way, embrace the policy of “less is more” and give students the freedom to learn about a topic of their own choosing. Building upon Google’s famous 20% time rule, which empowered employees to spend time on projects that were important to them, the only guidelines for this project are that: (1) the topic must relate to economics and (2) it must result in a very short non-traditional presentation (video, Prezi, or other production). Creativity and innovation are the key components and the goal is to illustrate economics in a distinctive and unusual way. Examples of student projects: Negative Externalities & You, Wally World Econ, and the Barter Survivalist.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-know-it-all-projects/>

Everyday Econ/Real World Econ

This quick visual project is an easy way to introduce economics and works well as a first day or class ice-

breaker assignment. Students must take a photo of an economic concept found in the real world (or limit it to their immediate surroundings) and tweet it to the instructor using the hashtag: #everydayecon or #realworldecon. You earn ½ point for your tweet and an additional ½ point if the instructor retweets it, favorites it or shows it in class!

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-everydayecon-%2B-realworldecon/>

ECON Selfies

A self-portrait allows for self-expression and this opportunity allows you to connect yourself with the economics concepts we are learning in this course by taking a self-portrait style photograph, a ‘selfie’ that illustrates or contains some link to one of those economics concepts. To earn credit toward your final overall grade, you must submit your photo following these instructions. Photos should show you illustrating one economics concept and the one sentence (140 characters or less) caption should briefly explain the connection to the concept. By submitting a photo you release all copyright and recognize that it will be published on the social media resources for our class. Points will be awarded for accuracy, difficulty of concept and for creativity.

Submit by posting your ECONSelfie to Instagram with the tag #ECONSelfie or by using Twitter along with our class hashtag and #ECONSelfie. Alternatively, you may send your photo via email and the subject line of your email must include: your name and ECONSelfie. Within the body of your email you must include your 140 character limit caption and your photo. For a more detailed explanation and analysis on the use of ECONSelfie see Al-Bahrani et al. (2015).

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-econselfie/>

ECON Memes

One type of Internet meme, known as an image macro, includes a photo or image along with interesting or humorous text related to the picture. They often use popular icons like the Dos Equis spokesman (The Most Interesting Man in the World) or Yoda from Star Wars, and include witty observations that can be a thought-provoking form of “edutainment.” In this assignment, your task is to create your own ORIGINAL economics or personal finance-themed meme using concepts, ideas, or terminology from your textbook, lecture notes, or class. Helpful meme creator sites are: quickmeme.com and imgflip.com. You can use established backgrounds found on meme creator sites as long as you add in your own original economics-themed text. Alternatively, you can use an image of your own along with your own original text.

Submit your completed project along with your name, concept(s) identification, and a 1-sentence description by the deadline via Twitter using #ECONmemes or email with the subject ECONmemes. Overuse of concepts/terms will not be approved (ex: 5 people submit memes about opportunity cost), so either submit EARLY or reference the Google Drive Slides FIRST to see what has been accepted before you submit. Your project is accepted when posted within our shared Google Drive Slides.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-econmemes/> and <http://economicmemes.com/>

Exploring The News/Current Events

ECON Ads

Economics is prevalent in the advertising world around us as marketing campaigns attempt to influence consumer choices. For this assignment, you must find a television or YouTube commercial (visual media) or an economics-themed print advertisement that contains at least one economic concept. In your submission, include the following: student name, identify the economic term or concept, and a link or copy of the advertisement (video clip or PDF file). Submit your assignment via Twitter using #ECONads or by email with ECONads and the student name as the subject line. *Note: Alternatively, ECONads can be assigned within your course’s learning management system as a discussion-based assignment.*

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-econads/>

ECON Today

Economics permeates the news cycle in both print and visual media. For this assignment, you must find an interesting article or news clip about economics. The subject must be recent (within the last year), relevant to economics and thought-provoking. Since economics is found throughout everyday life, do not limit yourself to Wall Street Journal business articles, Federal Reserve reports or news clips about the stock market! Instead, be creative and utilize non-traditional resources! To submit, include: your name, identify the economic term/concept, a short paragraph about how it illustrates economics, and a permanent link or PDF/video file. You can submit it via Twitter using #ECONtoday or by email with your name and ECONtoday as the subject line.

Examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/cubegrl/econ102-econtoday/>

Live-Tweet an Event

The State of the Union Address (SOTU) is an important event that covers a lot of economic content. For this assignment, you must tweet a question or comment based on the SOTU address. Make sure to use the class hashtag so that your classmates and I can follow your posts. In addition to posting a question, you must respond to at least one of your classmates' posts. Al-Bahrani & Patel (2015) provide more information on how to use Twitter, "live-tweeting", and other social media platforms to engage students. Note, this idea can also be extended to presidential debates as shown in the example below.

Examples: <https://twitter.com/search?vertical=default&q=%23debateecon>