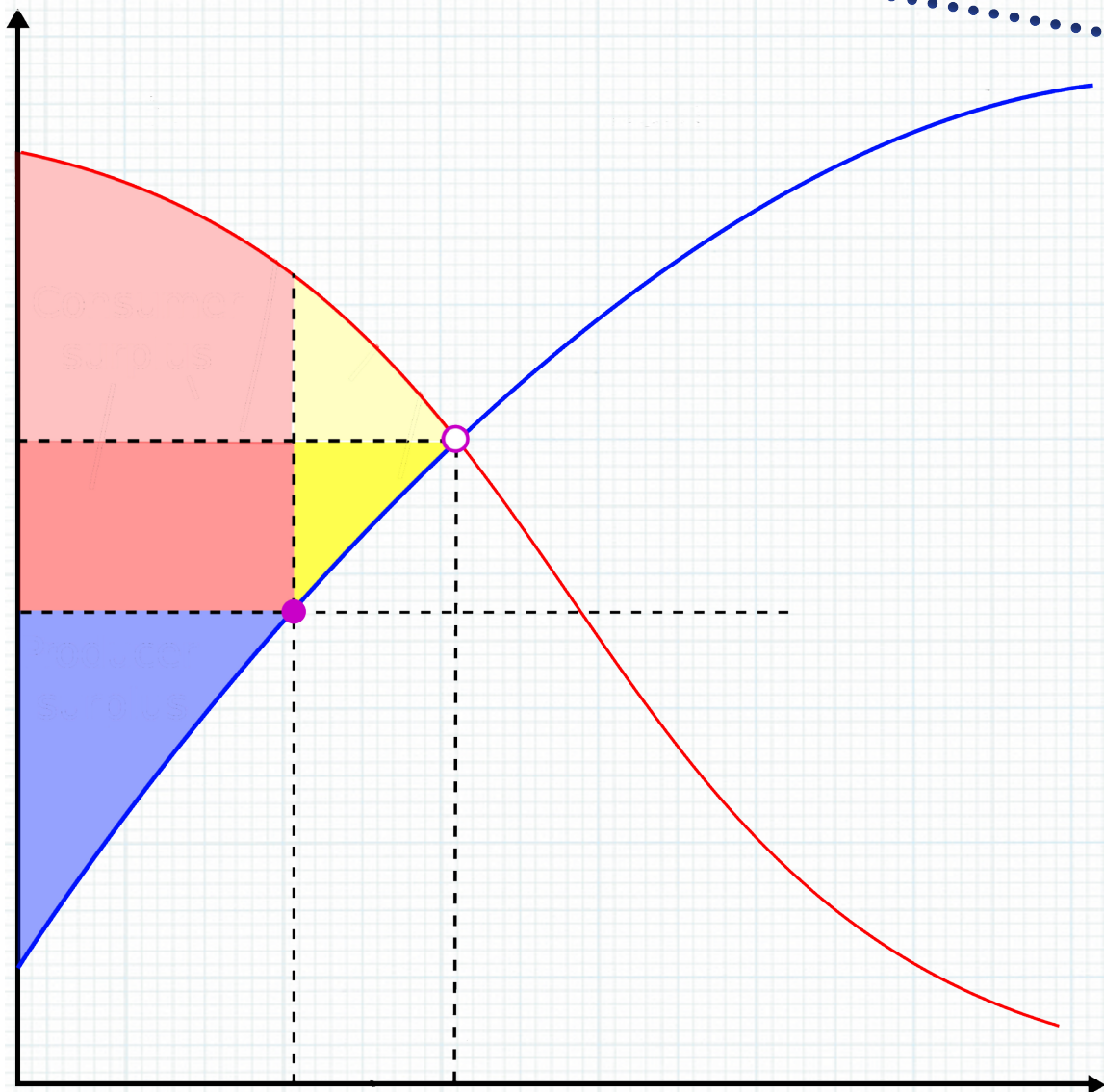
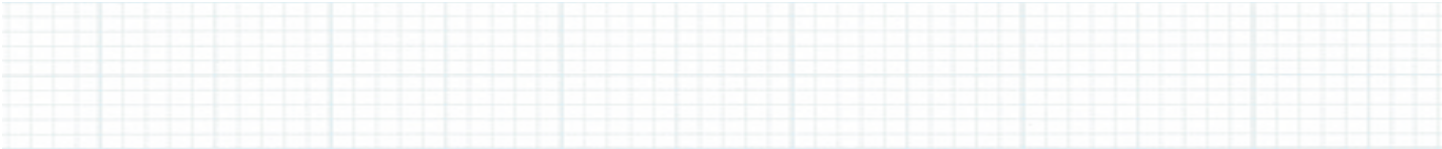


# THE POETRY OF ECONOMICS

Creative Writing Selections From UEP 251  
Economics for Planning and Policy Analysis  
Spring 2016





The poems in this anthology represent student submissions to creative writing assignments in a classroom experiment designed to test the effects of poetry versus expository writing on learning in an economics classroom.

The project was supported by a Tufts University Innovates grant, and represents a collaboration between the course instructor Mary Davis, an economist, with cognitive psychologist Ayanna Thomas and poet Jill McDonough. Graduate students Jonathan Diaz and Lylee Rauch-Kacenski provided research assistance and creative support for this project.

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Students wrote poetry as part of homework assignments, and during in-class writing exercises. For the in-class exercises, students had 10-15 minutes to create the poems. For the homework, the amount of time that students put in to the poems varied.

# 1 INEQUALITY

## Normative Standards of Equity

Nathaniel Mayo .....	5
Lylee Rauch-Kacenski .....	5
Elise Simons .....	5

## Determinants of Urban Inequality

Betsy Byrum .....	6
Lauren Lynch .....	6
Lylee Rauch-Kacenski .....	6
Nathaniel Mayo.....	7
Meghan Higgins .....	7
Brooke Schwartz .....	7

# 2 MARKETS AND ELASTICITY

## Elasticity

Monique Ching .....	8
Ashley Clark .....	8
Tony Lechuga .....	8
Tech Leng .....	8
Lauren Shuffleton .....	8

## Efficiency vs. Equity

Monique Ching .....	9
Mbacke Faye .....	9
Lauren Shuffleton .....	9
Christina Schlegel .....	10

# 3 CONSUMER AND PRODUCER THEORY

## Price Discrimination

Meghan Higgins .....	10
Anna Krane .....	10
Lauren Lynch .....	11
Nathaniel Mayo .....	11
Liz Pongratz .....	11
Brooke Schwartz .....	11

## **Average Total Cost, Economies of Scale, Diminishing Returns**

Betsy Byrum .....	12
Brooke Schwartz .....	12
Alexandra Purdy .....	13
Lylee Rauch-Kacenski .....	13

## **4 MARKET STRUCTURE AND TAXES**

### **Monopolies, Market Power**

Kaitie Butler .....	14
Monique Ching .....	14
Christina Schlegel .....	14

### **Sales Tax, “Bad” Tax, Principle of Neutrality, Second Best**

Monique Ching .....	15
Christina Schlegel .....	15
Tony Lechuga .....	16
Yuan Li .....	16

## **5 ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMICS AND COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS**

### **Externalities**

Elijah Romulus .....	16
Tony Lechuga .....	17
Jessie Norriss .....	17
Cecilia Smith .....	17

### **Public Goods, Tragedy of the Commons**

Betsy Byrum .....	18
Nathaniel Mayo .....	18
Lauren Lynch .....	19
Lylee Rauch-Kacenski .....	19
Meghan Higgins .....	20
Sharon Ron .....	20
Brooke Schwartz .....	20

## 6 URBAN ECONOMICS

### Gentrification

Ashley Clark .....	21
Meghan Higgins .....	22
Sharon Ron .....	22

### Scale and Agglomeration Economies

Mbake Faye .....	23
Elijah Romulus .....	23
Kaitie Butler .....	23
Monique Ching .....	24
Tech Leng .....	24
Christina Schlegel .....	24
Olivia Percy .....	25
Lauren Shuffleton .....	25

## 7 NEOCLASSICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Elizabeth Gohringer .....	26
Matt Hinds .....	27
Koko Li .....	28
Tech Leng .....	29
Lauren Lynch .....	30
Lylee Rauch-Kacenski .....	31



# INEQUALITY

## Normative Standards of Equity (In-Class Writing)

Choose one of the normative standards of equity (equality of outcomes, equality of opportunity, equal rewards for equal contributions, equal rights, attention to the least fortunate) to complete the following assignment: Attempt at least 5 lines of metered verse to creatively describe your choice.

My neighbor writes a poem and so do I  
And so we make an equal contribution  
And for reward a cookie each we get  
but what if I like cookies more than he does?  
If he will struggle more than I to write  
then he deserves two cookies he won't like  
For my part I will write a poem with ease  
and earn a treat that I will really like  
how do we make sure that rewards are fair?

**Elise Simons**

It's hard to give a break  
To those who like to take.

I pay my bills  
To fund their thrills

No bread? Eat some of my cake.

**Nathaniel Mayo**

We both work nine to five  
long hours, day after day  
though it's equal work  
Is it equal pay?  
Whose to judge the sweat, the depth  
of contributions to the system.  
When did we decide that doctors  
work harder than school teachers  
the barista smiling through condescending interactions  
with hedge fund owners

**Lylee Rauch-Kacenski**

## Determinants of Urban Inequality (Homework)

Read the Huffington Post article "Washington Sets the Pace on Income Inequality," which is unequivocally critical of higher income inequality in DC and makes many good arguments. In contrast, the Glaeser and Tobio (2009) article discussed in class also makes some interesting counterarguments, going so far as to suggest that urban income inequality is not necessarily a bad thing. Use a comparative analysis of the two articles to write a blank verse poem at least 7 lines long about urban income inequality. It need not focus on DC, but should generally describe (creatively!) the drivers of urban income inequality and/or whether you believe it is necessarily a bad thing.

### *A Poem on Urban Inequality*

Twice now on the commute I fall asleep  
While dreaming, thoughts of inequality  
Encroach into my dreams I wake and see  
(The suburbs sprawl McMansions dot the land)  
Neighborhoods divide by class by skin  
The gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots' widens  
College grads push higher paying jobs  
But still we subsidize their mortgage loans  
We value upper class, working elites  
But to the service workers turn our nose  
Refuse to loan to the bottom 20%  
Or make it possible for fair bank loans  
While renters sink further into despair  
The gap widens, low wages, who can fare?

Instead how do we support something fair?  
Wherever everyone begins to meet their needs  
Redistribution's the name of the game  
As taxes go to help even the field  
Increase quality schools and raise grad rates  
Higher wages, families able to save  
Slowly, slowly the wealth gap starts to fade

**Lylee Rauch-Kacenski**

Our nation's cities pride themselves to be  
for all, a place of opportunity  
With open arms they welcome rich and poor  
Each office building needs a corner store

But all these people need a place to live  
The owners yes, but renters too - what gives?!  
Our policies, right now, provide a break  
To mortgage holders who, for heaven's sake  
Are quickly building wealth within their home  
These policies must change - the time has come.

**Lauren Lynch**

There is a lot of inequality  
In urban places across our country  
And several factors help us to explain  
The reason why this issue has remained  
Like human capital and the ROI  
On education from school alumni  
Bad situations can often ensue  
More crime and less happiness are just two  
But inequality's not always bad  
Skilled people and sectors can often add  
Services and more opportunity  
For those who are in the community

**Betsy Byrum**

## *An Ode to San Franciscan Inequality*

Obscured by tech's most innovative crew  
The Tenderloin boasts less than fine cut views  
Alas, it's written in the mortgage deeds  
New Lorenz curves to which we won't accede

But won't we see San Fran's poorest souls rise?  
As neighbors model higher ed's return  
The view now seems a bit too compromised  
For those who deemed school not the place to learn

Your wage-constructed ladder falling short  
Thank heavens for the dress to break your fall  
This growth may hit a ceiling, says reports  
But first, you'll provide the floor of support

**Meghan Higgins**



Really Mr. Glaeser I can't agree,  
urban inequalities not for me

Higher incomes may drive better service  
(good schools, health care, things to help preserve us)

But that does not answer this here question...  
Who does it hurt, this financial oppression?

It's not those at the top that can't succeed  
but those at the "bottom" that are in "need"

**Brooke Schwartz**

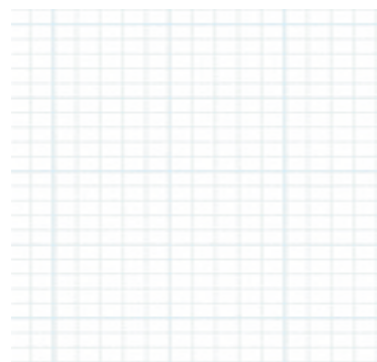


Your apartment's not a home, as it stands  
Not four walls, floors, wires, pipes  
Its market speculation: the price of land  
The key to tax deductions, better life

Good news! Rich folks are coming - cappuccino!  
The streets and private schools will be clean.  
The cost of things will rise a bit, but you know,  
You can't hurt homeowners - that's too mean

You make ten an hour at the bodega,  
Two bucks saved for the kids, one for mom  
Now its twelve-fifty, working at Panera  
But rent's up - and your future gets none.

**Nathaniel Mayo**





# MARKETS AND ELASTICITY

## Elasticity (In-class writing)

Based on the Boston Globe article "The Ride Less Ridden After Increase in Fare," write a poem in metered verse (attempt 5 lines) that explores elasticity from the perspective of a vulnerable population of your choice. How are elasticity and price changes reflected in the choices made by your population?



Limited budget means limited fun  
Four-dollar rides for each grocery run  
Wonder if appointment really is needed;  
Know for a fact cabin fever has seeded.  
Haven't seen outside my door in days  
Hope I can find another way.

**Lauren Shuffleton**



I live on milk and crackers most, these days.  
The Ride is more than I can really pay.  
I've hardly ventured out at all, since then  
Last week I could not go to see my friend  
It's sad, to trade my life for just some cash  
But things arise; I need to keep a stash  
And here, I end my days in solitude  
And all because the T's world view is skewed.

**Monique Ching**



Going to class to get their GEDs  
Or E-S-O-L to find a way up  
T fares increase, adult learners lose out  
Spending more cash, when less would be more just  
Mere rents to the rich prohibit the poor  
Who cease learning gains and lose so much more

**Tech Leng**



Inelastic is right with no good alternatives in sight.  
With this new fare increase -  
What else can I decrease?  
You see increased fares,  
and I see hungry stares

**Ashley Clark**



This fucking world where I have no voice  
They raise the cost knowing I have no choice  
Money, better wealth, buys the right to choose  
Low elasticity means I will lose  
Vulnerable means economic slave

**Tony Lechuga**



## Efficiency vs. Equity (Homework)

Read the attached article “South Sudan Hit by Bidding War for Brides” and answer the following questions: Write a blank verse poem of at least 7 lines describing the efficiency and equity concerns in the Sudanese bride market (either from the perspective of the buyer or bride).

In brush I creep, with eyes on lurching cattle.  
The years at war will help me still the rattle  
of nerves tied taut, now waiting for the sign  
to cry, to yell, to tackle cow and swine.  
At home we all have women we've eyed;  
we're only here to earn a perfect bride.  
I never thought I'd steal, take debt, risk life  
In the hard course of securing a wife.

**Lauren Shuffleton**

A bride! The dream, the aim of young males  
A craze, amplified from the past civil war  
A war, depriving proud men's livestock  
A monetary value to win a bride  
Driven by the feeling of reconstruction  
Bidding prices are rising  
Shifting right the demand curve will be  
Let's expect a market disequilibrium  
No cattle! No wife!  
Surplus will surge at this flow  
Thieving! Mobbing! Sudanese men are sinking into  
In a vicious circle the economy will turn into  
Deprived from remaining cows  
Sudanese families will be confronted to  
Fair distribution of wealth  
Oh my friend! Forget it!

**Mbacke Faye**

If only women came about  
Like widgets from a factory, churned out,  
With binders full of brides for eager lads,  
Each suitor pays in line with what he has.  
A dame who suffers from a manufactured flaw,  
Is sold at lower prices, set by law.  
Unsightly moles mean docking off a couple cows,  
But also makes a wretched boy a spouse.  
Some come included with a PhD,  
Upon them buyers looked upon with glee.  
“We keep astride of marketplace demands,  
Whereas before supply was not well-planned,”  
The factory owner did his guests regale  
The joys of fabricated wives for sale.

**Monique Ching**

Twelve cows, six sheep, and a little cash have I.  
Yet not enough a bride to buy.  
Years past, before the war,  
For us, the tribal leaders would ensure  
An equitable price for each - no more.

Of brides there is enough supply,  
(An efficient market in which to buy)  
All going to "the other guy"!  
No longer can I sit idly by.

The God of Price, he won't come down  
So I must find a way around,  
Amassing enough livestock  
So I can add a bride to my flock....

**Christina Schlegel**

## CONSUMER AND PRODUCER THEORY

### Price Discrimination (In-Class Writing)

Based on the New York Times article "Is Uber's Surge-Pricing an Example of High-Tech Gouging?"  
Attempt 5 lines of iambic pentameter to describe the Uber case or a similar example of price discrimination you experience in your own life.

The rain was falling, pooling in the streets  
Reflecting twinkling lights on NYE  
Thousands of manicured thumbs click "request"  
As street cabs gridlock, headed east and west  
Alas, drink budgets, ruptured at the start  
by surging prices five times multiplied  
The company line pins it on supply  
While five inch heels discount a subway ride.

**Meghan Higgins**

It is New Years Eve and time to play  
Head to friend's before next day.  
Step outside and hail a cheap cab ride,  
An UBER home with a price I cried.  
With a surge charge, no other choice,  
The ride then twitter to raise my voice.

**Anna Krane**

A trip to the store to pick up some bagels  
Only four bucks on Saturday morning  
Later that night in sleet and a wind storm  
That same exact journey cost twice as much!  
Uber you sneak, I thought we were buddies  
Apparently all you want is money

**Lauren Lynch**

Hey blan! Hey blan, come buy some stuff from me!  
Some onions, cola, rice, spaghetti, tea.  
I'll take deux mango, ten gourde, bon prix.  
Just like what she got, same price for me?  
No no blan, its not bon prix for you -  
Ten gourde gets blan just one mango, not two!

**Nathaniel Mayo**

On Friday nights the clubber must be weary  
For if they're far from home and things seem dreary  
The uber app may soon come to mind  
Alas the clubber will be sad to find  
That uber surging wants to rob them blind

**Liz Pongratz**

Hmmm, ahhhh...it's two AM we stop to think  
The T? It's closed. Shit. She says to her drink.  
Uber? There's 4 of us so that could work  
Okay, wait what?? Two times the early fare??  
Well, I guess we could walk...ugh I don't care.

**Brooke Schwartz**

## Average Total Cost, Economies of Scale, Diminishing Returns (Homework)

Choose one or more of these economic concepts (average total costs, economies of scale, and the law of diminishing returns) and write a blank verse poem of at least 7 lines. Your poem should present a creative rendition of the definition(s) and/or describe a real-world example of how this concept(s) comes up in your daily life.

*Duo:*

### *Diminishing Returns on Help in the Kitchen*

I cook at home in quite a small kitchen  
When they come visit, my parents pitch in  
When just mom helps we can get in the zone  
Getting much more done than when I'm alone  
But my dad is happy to help as well  
And with this additional "personnel"  
It gets too crowded, stuff gets knocked around,  
Our added production starts to go down

### *Diminishing Marginal Utility*

On weekend mornings and without delay  
I make some coffee to jump-start my day  
The first cup's delicious - fragrant and hot  
It helps wake me up and def hits the spot  
I have a second, it quenches my thirst  
But's not as satisfying as the first  
I drink a third cuz it's there in the pot  
It's good but makes my stomach hurt a lot

**Betsy Byrum**

Really, I do like the farmer's market:  
fresh plums, fresh eggs, fresh milk, fresh grapes, fresh cheese  
But as nice as it is it's not my place  
for when I go shopping I want my space

I like my food in bulk, that is, you see  
so its Costco where you'll find me  
I go down the aisles feeling at home  
buying twenty apples, saying "shalom"

Now, you may not enjoy Costco like me,  
but here's a fact with which you must agree  
Costco is an economy of scale  
and trust me they even sell kale

**Brooke Schwartz**



### ***A Poem for Lindley***

In a production shop she spends her days  
Making exquisite furniture to sell  
Each piece handmade ornate details abound  
Smooth to the touch the grain, designs, impress  
One table sets you back four thousand (\$)  
To mill the parts, assemble and hand plane  
Then glue up, wax, now oil- the final touch  
Labor of love takes twenty four to build (hours)  
With all that set-up silly to make one  
When built in twos each only takes sixteen (hours)  
A run of three the build time is thirteen  
You get the gist, efficiencies increase  
(but only to a point, then comes decline  
Fifty tables at once would be obscene,  
Nowhere to build, not enough wood or help)  
Each table still sells for four thousand (\$)  
So profits rise as production time falls  
Economies of scale in real life  
More than confusing numbers in a book

**Lylee Rauch-Kacenski**

### ***Indigo Fire***

Small businesses, as many know are hard,  
Whether starting something common or vanguard.  
When you are up against the biggest stores,  
They have economy of scale in scores.  
So for your new pottery studio,  
Coil, trim, bisque, slip, score, glaze and throw, throw, throw!!  
Until your business makes enough to grow...

**Alexandra Purdy**

# MARKET STRUCTURE AND TAXES

## Monopolies, Market Power (In-Class Writing)

Based on the Boston Globe article "Beer distributor to pay \$2.6 million fine in pay-to-play case" answer the question below: Drawing from the concepts (not necessarily the example itself) outlined in the article describing 'pay-to-play' in the beer industry, attempt a blank verse (iambic pentameter!) poem of at least 5 lines. Try to use at least two economic concepts in your poem – i.e., monopoly power vs competition, anti-competitive behavior, social welfare losses, etc.

Prevailing economic thought asserts  
Monopolies are generally unwise.  
A market made of only one results  
In artificial shortage and high price  
But one may argue that monopoly  
Has helped drug companies to innovate.  
That may be true, but for the dying destitute  
This pill is tough and cold to swallow.

**Monique Ching**

the largest one has all the power  
little business shrinks and cowers  
the wish for how we want to live  
is perfectly competitive  
wouldn't it be just so nice  
if no one person set the price!

**Kaitie Butler**

Our monopoly was working well  
We had enough of beer to sell.  
By freezing out competing brewers  
through shady pay-to-play maneuvers.  
We dominate the local markets  
(local brewers got nowhere to park it)  
Our actions mean consumers lose  
Their opportunity to buy local booze.

**Christina Schlegel**

## Sales Tax, “Bad” Tax, Principle of Neutrality, Second Best (Homework)

Write a blank verse poem of at least 7 lines that describes the competing interest of a sales tax to both generate tax revenue and change behavior. Ideally your poem will address in some way (even roundabout!) the Principles of Neutrality and the Second Best as it relates to your chosen tax.

Marijuana taxes for general revenue and education?  
That’s an interesting take on diversification.  
High sales taxes - close to 30 percent  
Has led analysts to warn of discontent.  
“Buyers fleeing to the black market;  
Is this something we permit?”  
Taxing “bads” to fund our schools,  
Is this a socially efficient tool?  
Who bears the burden,  
What income group or ethnicity?  
(Taxed marijuana has shown elasticity.)  
But with \$100 million revenue last year alone;  
The excess burden seems overblown.  
Who knew all things that could be high  
(Taxes, people, revenue...)  
In a state so dry.

**Christina Schlegel**

My chromosome offends you, I suppose,  
An externality you do not like.  
Perhaps it’s periods that you oppose?  
Or bleeding breads at work that you dislike?  
You’ll gladly tax my tampons; pay me less,  
While you enjoy Viagra, tax exempt.  
This “bad” behaviour won’t be easily redressed,  
A fact, I’m sure, you can preempt,  
Why tax my menses if I could just stop?  
An idiot knows that would make no sense.  
My monthly visits to the corner shop  
Will help to fund some government expense.  
When menopause sets in, I will be free  
Not fined for orphaned ova I discharge.  
Unless I get a hysterectomy,  
And shed this gender-based surcharge.

**Monique Ching**

The government treats us like maniacs,  
They're trying to create a snack food tax,  
Want to control how we spend our greenbacks,  
We shuffle round on caterpillar tracks,  
Eating snacks coated in paraffin wax,  
Neutrality, shit, better check the facts,  
A tax based on values, where's the impacts,  
Less money we make the harder the axe,  
Honestly feels like your knives in our backs,  
When our view of food is a parallax,  
With no tax on snacks made of glycine max,  
But breakfast of Skittles and Honey Smacks,  
We don't want to be fat as razorbacks,  
Too bad all we have is corner snack shacks.

**Tony Lechuga**

Why does tax happen?  
Revenue or change action.  
A sales tax works often.  
Two ends are competing.  
Demand curve is elastic,  
Tax changes the behavior;  
Demand curve is inelastic,  
Tax brings more revenue.  
Taxing can be good,  
Less bad externality.  
Taxing can be a waste,  
Less social welfare created.

**Yuan Li**

## ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMICS AND COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

### Externalities (In-Class Writing)

Attempt a blank verse (iambic pentameter) poem of at least 5 lines describing your personal experience with a positive or negative externality.

Forced to write about negative externalities  
That coincide with my dealing with reality  
How much are you worth? A real economic question  
Not just a segment for a part of the class lesson  
Policies are pushed based on this ludicrous notion  
Life translated into dollars and cents instead of spirit and emotion.  
How much is the life valuing others' lives?  
Is it the queen bee to the rest in the hive?  
Or is this valuation method as strong as the bug you swat?

**Elijah Romulus**

The woman upstairs is a new mother,  
Her baby spends whole nights all a blubber,  
Screaming and wailing, oh what a bother.  
Dreaming I use my pillow to smother,  
That baby, but then, someone does love her,  
I hope she doesn't have another.

**Tony Lechuga**

### ***Negative Externality - Living with boys***

Living with boys, nothing new  
Living with boys from the Northeast though  
a lot to do.

Keep every bedroom door shut tightly,  
For even if opened ever so slightly  
The street cat outside will never look so frightly

Gone for five days, I was scared to come in  
Constant stench, I have no clue where to begin

Shower daily they do, but eating  
nasty foods will make you smell  
Worse than poopoo.

Alas here we are, the negative  
externalities up too far.  
Counting the days until they move out,  
Hopeful such odor takes the  
fast track too.

**Jessie Norris**

### ***Traffic Pollution (negative externality)***

Can't talk on the phone now, windows are open  
Close the windows, then heat comes in  
But I can't hear you, traffic is loud  
So I must choose between heat or listen  
Cars get to speed up under my window sill  
Forget the carbon emissions, what about noise?  
Noise pollution, I must endure  
Lest I am willing to pay  
Rent premium to move away  
From the road's margin  
But ability to pay is a constraint  
Better off dear than no shelter

**Cecilia Smith**

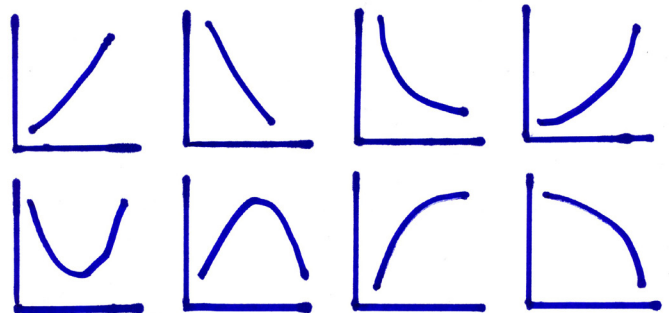


## Public Goods, Tragedy of the Commons (Homework)

Write a blank verse poem of at least 7 lines that describes your understanding of public goods as discussed in class. Your poem would ideally incorporate more than one of the public good concepts related to excludable, rival, free riding, public vs private provision, tragedy of the commons, etc.

In the study of the economy  
Understanding our public goods is key  
They're non-excludable, here's what that means:  
They're open to all - from paupers to queens.  
We all have access, folks can't be kept out,  
And so none of us have to go without.  
Public goods are non-rival - at one time  
A good that is yours can also be mine.  
A public good, it can be used by you,  
And at the same time, I can use it too.

**Betsy Byrum**



Breath in, breath in, but too much  
You know, the dirty air and such.

Nobody owns the air, we all  
Breathe and belch and snort. So small  
Bits of gas and things that we deposit  
Aren't government by regs or laws - it  
Goes into the public sphere we call the planet,  
A public good for which we can't plan. It's  
Just too big to think that we each own one seven-billionth  
And the administrative costs to manage that would be in the trillions.

**Nathaniel Mayo**

Leaves crunch beneath my feet the scent of pine  
Engulfs me as I scale the steep incline  
The public goods, trails, parks help keep me sane  
As concrete jungles, crowds, cars melt my brain

Together strangers share the common space  
Smile, recreate, create a sense of place  
But who is charged to care for common space?  
If no one owns it no one feels the need  
To keep it clean, respect it, plant new seeds

A fine balance between use and neglect  
Create connection, stories that reflect  
The need for green spaces to gather in  
The reason to take care of public land

To knit together shared experience  
Lower our guards, look past seeming difference  
Importance of shared commons can't be lost  
To squabbles over use, who pays the cost?  
It's all of us if we can't see a way  
To share the work, the space so we can play.

**Lylee Rauch-Kacenski**

I ran to the swing set, wind in my hair  
Rushing to be the first one to get there

Only two swings, and more than ten students  
In this situation, one must be prudent

While swings have no price they are rival goods  
Your use excludes mine, it's well understood

It's selfish indeed, but the way things work  
Rationality makes us act like jerks.

**Lauren Lynch**

I took for granted, all these hard-fought years  
The conduits our synapses produce  
No hypothetical quota on tears  
Purporting an empathy broad and diffuse

But like the earth mined dry of common need  
Our minds, requiring admitting fees  
Credentials upon which we have agreed  
For rival social justice to be seized

The tragedy is thusly summarized  
Even compassion wrongly colonized  
My costs and benefits are prioritized  
At the expense of those disenfranchised

For whom is our concern truly deserved?  
The consensus: empathy's best conserved

### **Meghan Higgins**

Can we share a lane?  
After seven on a week day I'm there  
In the Tufts pool, swimming, really I swear.

At this hour its free with an I.D.,  
busting with old men who ate too much brie

Now I don't mind the old hairy geezers,  
but when there's six or eight, they're not pleasers

It's not because I'm ageist per sé  
rather that the pool is rival and they're in the WAY!

### **Brooke Schwartz**

The fireworks exploded in the night air.  
While the city manager mumbled "it's not fair"

For weeks he curated and choreographed a show  
Worth of being captured by Van Gogh.

"Charge them a dollar!" cried he, with pride  
"Our annual budget will easily be supplied."

But on the night of the grand debut,  
Only a meager crowd paid to view

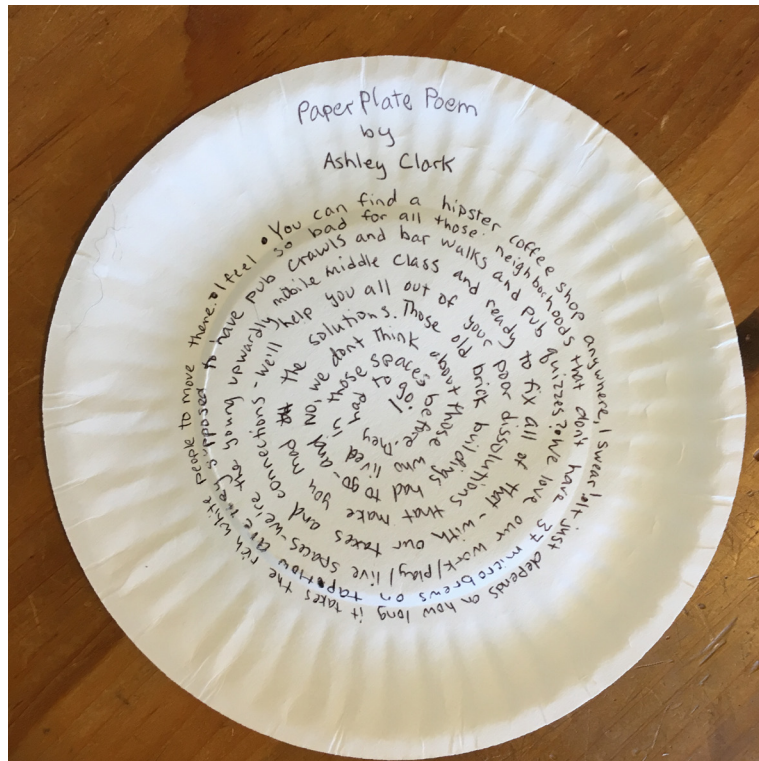
The residents, they watched from window and on roof,  
Alas, they were all free-riders; this event was proof.

### **Sharon Ron**

# URBAN ECONOMICS

## Gentrification (In-Class Writing)

Freeman and Braconi 2004 argue that gentrification has positive spillover effects for the original residents that remain in gentrified neighborhoods. From the perspective of either the gentrifier or the displaced/original resident, write a blank verse poem of at least 5 lines describing the experience of living in or being displaced from a gentrifying neighborhood.



### *Paper Plate Poem*

You can find a hipster coffee shop anywhere, I swear!  
It just depends on how long it takes the rich white people to move there.  
I feel so bad for all those neighborhoods that don't have 37 microbrews on tap  
How are they supposed to have pub crawls and bar walks and pub quizzes?  
We love our work/play/live spaces -  
we're the young upwardly mobile middle class and ready to fix all of that -  
With our taxes and connections -  
we'll help you all out of your poor dissolutions that make you mad at the solutions.  
Those old brick buildings had to go - and no, we don't think about those who lived in  
those spaces before they had to go.

**Ashley Clark**

## *My favorite (gentrified) things*

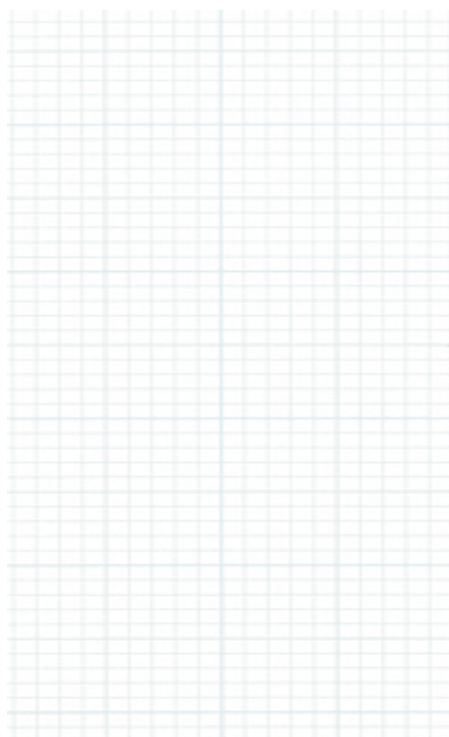
Dog walkers on sidewalks and gluten-free dinners  
Whole Foods produce and brand-new beard trimmers  
Fresh pastries tied up with strings  
These are a few of my favorite things

Cream colored coffees and artisanal strudels  
Brownstones and fixed-gears and instagrammed noodles  
Wild goose whiskey with moon on their wings  
These are a few of my favorite things

Girls in thrifted dress, with pinterested sashes  
Cruelty-free make-up that stay on nose and eyelashes  
Netflix-infused winters that melt into springs  
These are a few of my favorite things

When displacement bites, when the cost of living stings  
When I'm feeling SAD (seasonal affective disorder)  
I simply remember my favorite things  
Like Netflix-infused winters that melt into springs  
Then I don't feel so bad.

**Sharon Ron**



“Good morning.” I told my doorman, Jose.  
“Just on my way to morning Soul Cycle”  
But first, I'll grab an organic au lait  
And then email that start-up guy Michael

This neighborhood's so full of charm and grit  
But gaaawd, I wish they'd add a Trader Joe's  
That reminds me, at lunch I'll stop and get  
The kid's app for that Montessori school

And ask Jose to keep the front door locked  
Those VA clinic guys go by in flocks  
I wonder if Jose knew them before  
When he still owned his little corner store

**Meghan Higgins**



## Scale and Agglomeration Economies (Homework)

Write a blank verse poem of at least 7 lines that describes your understanding of the economic rationale for the existence of cities discussed in class. Your poem would ideally incorporate one or more of the important scale or agglomeration economies concepts.

I am poor citizen! Gentrification  
A term with a scary resonance, for me it is!  
Those who, at the end of the month,  
Hardly their bills are paid!  
Fear on my face! Staring at my well-off new neighbors  
With them they brought! Investors, shop owners, real estate agents  
Those whose power stimulate the economy  
More rich people, more resources, better quality of life!  
Am I supposed to be reassured, satisfied?  
Better food, better education they claiming  
Until when? My fear is to wake up and be kicked out!  
In a city that is upgrading from lacking to well-off!  
My city officials like it , eagedred by these changes  
Screaming more revenues!  
Gentrification a vitamin to my city, a distress to my life!

### Mbake Faye

Small town America is falling off the map,  
Deserted farms, run down factories, and  
textile scraps,  
Not much better than the hoods the ghettos,  
and the traps.  
Cities and towns on the verge of bankruptcy,  
Population decline due to the lack of  
sustainable industry.  
These 7 lines culminate into a brief dissent,  
On how economics fails to fully address  
the concentration of wealth by the top one  
percent.

### Elijah Romulus

a few small houses, in a row  
beside a field, with seeds to sow.  
a factory moves in next door,  
more people than we've seen before.  
more people still, move to our town  
the jobs for factory work abounds.  
new businesses are creeping in,  
feeding, clothing, teaching children.  
one factory has grown to many,  
each one makes a pretty penny.  
costs are low, production high,  
all you need, it's right nearby.  
our little town was itty bitty,  
now it's grown to a giant city.

### Kaitie Butler

The planes, the trains, the automobile lanes  
A high concentration of mighty brains  
The ease of transport from one place to next  
Low costs for inputs, no need to be vexed  
These clusters make marginal costs go down  
While profits bring life to cities, not towns

Our cities have grown while our towns lose might  
Population decline - a curse, alright  
Efficiency is high where costs are slim  
Which makes the prospects for small towns seem dim  
By pooling their might, they'll avert that fate  
At last, here's that rhyme for agglomerate!

### Tech Leng

In Park City, Utah, silver was King.  
For nearly 100 years,  
A town built on mining.  
Miner's pick, pick, pick,  
The population booms.  
Did anyone know silver would be  
The little town's doom?

1951: It's a "Ghost Town of the West"  
But Park City has been twice-blessed.  
A little ski jump  
Was built on the old mine dump...  
A new "company town" emerges,  
Park City's skiing industry surges.  
Now business is good  
Ski shops and retail open in the neighborhood.  
In 2002, town residents  
The Olympics would behold.

And once again, all that glitters is gold.

### Christina Schlegel

You see the blinking lights along the shore  
And realize this growth came out of war.  
The days of opium came first of all,  
Before the Brits made this a port of call.  
Then traders came from far and wide,  
Where commerce and cheap labor did collide.  
A perfect port in Asia's marketplace,  
While capitalist values it embraced.  
Then retail stores began to coalesce,  
And growth that was not easy to suppress.  
But now Hong Kong is China's once again,  
We'll see how that affects the market trend.

### Monique Ching

People pine for people, and they also need to shop.  
They demand investment in the roads, the schools, and cops;  
Many will request much more: events, town halls, street sweeps.  
None of these beloved systems or goods are cheap,  
Economies of scale make possible to offer  
Amenities, paid for from municipal coffers.  
As more people cluster, easier it is  
To meet the needs, attract more biz.

### **Lauren Shuffleton**

#### A Tale of Retail Agglomeration

In my downtown there was a group of local shops  
Filled with specialized goods and run by the moms and pops  
Then a ways down the road, a big old mall was built  
Teens they gathered, food court drinks were spilt;  
And of course the shopping preferences began to tilt

Along with that mall, came Walmart and Costco  
Lower prices and convenience; made it a must go  
With spatial concentration influencing where to shop  
My downtown center is empty and businesses did flop  
The mall and discount shops came out the victor  
That's of course until our friend, Amazon, entered the picture

A new retail agglomeration ready to strike  
That's faster, easier; you're guaranteed to find what you like.  
"It's death to malls! Down with big box stores!" declared from online  
Those businesses now closing; they too need adjusting  
Trying to keep up with the ever-changing consumer mind

But could there be a spark of hope?  
Reversing the fate of the local shop mope  
In my downtown the small shops reemerged  
Again they gather for personal experiences and a unique good

### **Olivia Percy**

# NEOCLASSICAL ASSUMPTIONS

## (Homework)

Imagine a situation or instance in your own life that violates one of the failed assumptions of the neoclassical model. Describe the real-life example you have chosen using the following formats: A single paragraph in short answer form, and a short original poem in metered verse of at least 6 lines.

A situation in my own life that violates the neoclassical model's assumption of perfect information is waiting for the bus. Recently, I've had a couple of situations in which I've been waiting for the bus to come and have used an app on my phone called NextBus. The app may say that the bus is coming in 15 minutes, but the bus actually arrives in 25 minutes. While I may have planned enough time to get to my destination based on a bus arrival time of 15 minutes, I may not have planned enough time to get to my destination with a bus arrival time of 25 minutes, resulting in my being late to my appointment. In this situation, I did not have perfect information, although I tried to obtain as much information as I could (using the app). The neoclassical model may assume that a person should be able to get to their destination on time, given that they have "perfect information," but given the variations of timing caused by different traffic conditions and delays, perfect information can be extremely hard to come by, even with the help of technology.

I planned enough time - but what! But what!  
The bus won't come - why not! Why not!  
It says it's here - but it's late, I fear.  
My hands are cold, my legs might fold.  
The man next to me smells like beer.  
...I might get there this time next year.

**Elizabeth Gohringer**

A farmer has a budget of \$400/week to employ workers. He has the following pool to hire from: 1. Masters students who are seeking to earn \$15/hour, 2. High school students who are seeking to earn \$10/hour 3. Migrant workers who are seeking to earn \$5/hour. He decides to hire a migrant worker and pay \$10/hour. This violates the neoclassical assumption that firms will be as monetarily efficient as possible. The migrant worker would have been satisfied by earning half as much. Additionally, if he would have paid the asking price, he could have hired another migrant worker, and increased his labor force by 33%. Based on these facts, the farmer is being irrational. However, with more information, we can come to understand this farmer's rational. The farmer also knows that both the masters and high school students will not have the time to focus on farm activities. The migrant worker will be able to focus solely on farming. He also knows that if he pays the migrant worker \$5/hour, they will have enough to feed their family back home, but will have to sleep in a tent city. With \$10/hour, rent can be afforded at a low income housing unit. From the farmer's standpoint, the improvements in living conditions for the worker is well worth the reward in that the worker will be healthier and happier. Knowing that their business is supporting the livelihood of one individual brings the farmer the greatest joy, or the most utility.

To pay a migrant  
A living wage even though  
They would work for less  
Neoclassical  
Theorists would call you a fool  
Who's Irrational?

**Matt Hinds**


I used to think Girl Scout Cookies were wholesomely made and not highly processed, because they're supporting a good organization, they taste good, and even on the website under their recipes section for Girl Scouts cookies inspired recipes, the ingredients listed look wholesome (in the sense that they contained only natural cookie making ingredients like milk, flour, eggs, etc). However, I did not have perfect information on what I was consuming until I recently read the ingredients myself on a box of Caramel deLites. I found out there were many processed ingredients like sorbitol and glycerin in the cookies. Had I known this before, I would not have made the decision to consume the cookies. However after knowing this and being grossed out I was eating something soap is made of along with other ingredients that negatively impacts my body when ingested, I made an irrational choice and ate 2 more deLites, before vowing to not eat Girl Scout cookies anymore.

I used to love Girl Scout Cookies  
Until I found they were not filled with goodies  
Damn it, market assumption of perfect information  
Eating sorbitol can give you constipation  
Now I must be rational and stop this consumption  
One more bite though, no hesitation

**Koko Li**



Spending my money on bad coffee and wasteful and environmentally harmful packaging is hard to resist - even before I step on the MBTA en route to Tufts, I pass within a 45-second walking detour of two neighborhood Dunkin Donuts locations. While I enjoy great coffee, I don't insist on indulging that preference every day and consume coffee primarily for the caffeine. At home, I possess all the equipment and ingredients to make (marginally) better tasting, less wasteful, comparably caffeinating, and lower-priced coffee, and in a comparable amount of time to waiting in line. By frequenting these two neighborhood DD spots, I routinely violate the assumption of rational self-interest by undermining my deeply-held preferences to save money, be caffeinated, and consume in a less wasteful manner. So why do I buy coffee every day? I do so because of the utility I gain from convenience, from loyalty to employees who accommodate my consistently inconsistent orders, and from the connections I make by participating in my local economy.



Caffeine, my vice, is all that keeps me sane  
for me, for all who ride the 'T' in pain  
We feed this need to numb the agony

Of screeching trains, delays, and man-spread knees

But rationality is not my game  
Home brew or buy, it's not the same. But look!  
A Dunks looms near, its joy awaits my brain  
I'll blunt the pain and watch my balance drain

**Tech Leng**

Prior to reading *The Omnivore's Dilemma* I frequently purchased “cage free” and “free range” eggs (The Country Hen eggs, among others). Although I was fully aware that these eggs typically cost 25-50% more than standard eggs, I was under the impression that by spending an extra \$1 per carton of eggs I purchased, I was supporting The Country Hen's efforts to provide their chickens with “a comfortable, cage free existence with access to the outdoors and a diet of the very best things a chicken could desire.” As it turns out, I was not fully informed about the regulatory processes, or in this case the lack thereof, associated with the terms “cage free” and “free range” eggs. As I later learned, these terms could mean as little as the fact that 1000 chickens living in a cramped warehouse or barn may have “access” to a single door at one end of the barn, open for only 2 hours per day, which provides access to an area of green space so small that only 10 chickens can fit outside at a time. Had I been aware of this information at the time of my purchase, I would not have chosen to spend the additional money on “cage free” and “free range” eggs. Considering that “acting independently on the basis of full information” is one of the assumptions of the neoclassical model of rationality, it is fair to say that this assumption was violated in this situation. Nowadays, I try to avoid purchasing eggs from the grocery store, and instead purchase them from local farmer's markets where I can speak to farm owners directly.

Imagining chickens, caged and unwell  
I took out my wallet, “Oh what the hell”  
These eggs, yes they cost more, but what's a price?  
If money buys humane treatment, that's nice.

To my chagrin I discovered the lie  
“Cage free” and “free range”, just pie in the sky  
With no regulation, these terms are vague  
How then to know the true price of an egg?

**Lauren Lynch**

Choosing a Field Project team for the UEP Field Projects class violates the perfect information assumptions of the Neoclassical model of understanding human motivations. It is difficult to make a fully formed rational choice about which project may be the best fit knowing that the description is only a general idea, the project in flux, and the scope of the work may change many times over the course of the project. When choosing a Field Project the students do not have perfect information. They may have an idea of which project sounds exciting and seems like it will utilize their skills and talents, while in practice the project takes different skills and a different direction than initially intended. Another part of the unknown information is group dynamic. When applying, a student doesn't know who the other team members will be, and how those different personalities, strengths, and styles will affect the team. In addition to the scope of the project changing, and interactions between the team affecting the project; the third piece of imperfect information is how the client will interact with the team. The personal interactions between the team and the client add another unknown layer of dynamics that may change the outcome of the final project. Though students don't have perfect information to choose a project they can still make a decision informed by what they do know, their own personal skills, work style, and passions around specific topics.

### ***Contemplating Perfect Information: An Ode to Field Projects***

loose project topics vie for center stage  
designing districts, land trusts, roads to pave  
imperfect information's all we have  
oh how do we collate and form a plan?  
as group dynamics shift our views expand  
we move our project forward, not too slow  
revising expectations as we go.

**Lylee Rauch-Kacenski**

