

Environmental Economics 4545: second paper assignment

If you are going to get serious about a paper, now is the time.

For those of you hoping to complete a paper for this course, I need the following emailed to me as an attachment on or before **Sunday, Nov 4th**.

Please send it in WORD or PDF

The following naming conventions are important

In the subject heading of your email put
“4545paper2-yourlastname”

Give your file the same exact name.

So, for example, my file name would be “4545paper2-Morey.pdf” if the file was in pdf.

The documents will include:

1. A clear, precise, and informative title for you proposed paper
2. A one or two page summary of your topic and issue with as much detail as you can provide, including discussion of relevant theory, concepts, stylized facts, etc.
3. A list of the reading and references that will in appear in your paper, in a standard referencing format. This list should include everything you have read and will use to write your paper. If it is on the list, you have read it. If it is not on the list, you are not planning on using it in your paper. I will use your reference list to judge whether you are ready to finish the paper.

On the basis of this assignment I will decide whether you should, or should not, proceed to a complete and final paper. My decision will be final. I don't want you writing a paper unless I think it will be a good paper.

I do not want you writing a paper if you are doing poorly in the class. The paper option is an opportunity for learn more, not a substitute for a poor performance on the quizzes and midterm. If you did poorly on the midterm, your efforts should be allocated to doing better on the upcoming quizzes and final.

For guidance and inspiration, read some of the student papers on the course web page.

Things to keep in mind while completing this assignment:

Make sure your topic has economic content; that is, convince your reader that your topic has relevance to a course in environmental economics.

Describe the issue/problem/task using economic terminology

What does economic theory say/predict about your topic?

If your topic has an equity and/or efficiency angle associated with it, make this clear.

If your topic deals with a market failure, make this clear and identify the type(s) of market failure.

In addition to making clear the topic covered by your paper, it also might be important to say what it will not do. For example, how are you limiting your paper? What restrictive assumptions are you making?

This assignment needs to convince me that you have learned the necessary economic theory for the topic you choose.

Be specific.

Much of the work for your paper needs to be completed for you to do well on this assignment. You have to do well on this assignment to keep the paper option on the table.

Some background stuff:

I am fairly flexible about what constitutes a paper, with the provision that it has economic and environmental content. It could be a project of some sort, and it could be a group endeavor. A project might be the development of a web page that looks at some natural resource or environmental issue from an economic perspective.

What is important to me is to see that you have taken the theory you have learned in class and can apply it to gain insight into some environmental problem or issue that is of interest to you. For example, choose a natural resource or environmental market failure that interests you, explain why the market failed, and suggest policies for improving the situation. I want to see you thinking like an economist. A profusion of footnotes and references is not necessary, but it is important to properly reference your sources, including web pages.

Make your topic specific rather than general. For example, don't write about logging on Forest Service Land, but rather write about logging in a specific National Forest and/or logging a specific stand such as old growth. Don't write about the benefits and costs of ski area development in general terms, but rather some specific aspect of some proposed development.

Develop a research plan and then start to carry it out. For readings, start with your text. The text won't have much, for example, on ski area development, but it will have a lot of the relevant theory. Find out if there is a EIS (environmental impact statement) for the problem you are considering, and try to obtain it.

You do not have the time or resources to measure the benefits and costs of some action. You cannot do it in the scope of a term paper. Rather, what you can do is discuss what some of the benefits or costs might be, and discuss how one might try to measure one of them.

Is your topic related to the allocation of resources? If so, make this clear.

If the intent of your paper is to isolate on and discuss some specific market failure, such as mine tailings in the Arkansas river, discuss possible corrections from both an efficiency, equity and political feasibility perspective.

I am particularly fond of papers/projects on local issues. Thousands of papers will be written on global warming, maybe only one, yours, will be about the impact of the parking fees in Boulder Mountain parks. With a local issue you are the only one investigating it from an economic perspective, and you have the opportunity to talk to the people involved. With local issues, the details often jump out, forcing you to be accommodating to real world considerations.

Some interesting papers in the past have been on such topics as: "Do We Really Need Bighorn Sheep," "The Economics of Whaling," "The Economics of Outer Space," "Recycling," "The Love Canal," "The Harp Seal Hunt," "Wilderness Management," "Boulder Mountain Parks," "Deforestation," "Regulating Mountain Biking," "Ski Area Development," "Two Forks Dam," "Management in the Holy Cross Wilderness area," "Vasquez: The Proposed Expansion of

Winter Park," "Oxygenated Fuels and the Front Range," "Rafting on the Arkansas," Boulder Open space," Wood-burning Stoves," hunting and fishing in Colorado, etc.

The syllabus for 4535 and 4545 (on the 4545 web page) are both good sources for paper topics.

Keep in mind that you will likely not have the resources or time to do a complete study. For example, you will not be able to estimate the benefits and costs of some ski area development. Rather a good paper on this topic would discuss how one might measure such benefits and costs if one had the time and resources. It might, for example, develop a survey instrument.