

### ECON 222 Written Assignment #3

Due: Sunday, November 29, 2020 11:59 PM

Submit in Dropbox on Blackboard

Graded out of 10 points

**This assignment can replace a previous writing assignment with an unsatisfactory grade (or a missing one). If you wish it to replace another grade make sure to write what you want to do with these 10 points at the TOP of the submission and explain why the points should be applied there.**

Style requirements: Longer than 1 page, but no more than 3 pages.  
Double-spaced (or 1.5 spaced)  
11 or 12 pt. font (standard, professional font – NOT one like this)  
Spend time on the content, not the formatting  
Stop giving me cover pages, please  
Need to submit a Microsoft Word document (ends in .docx or .doc)

**Assignment:** Pick one of the topics in the topic list at the bottom of this assignment to argue 'for' and 'against' (similar to writing assignment 2). It may be easier to frame your argument as 'costs' and 'benefits' if it is an 'either-or' decision (and the 'for-against' argument comes with which is bigger: costs or benefits, because that is what it really comes down to from an economic viewpoint).

Alternatively, if the topic does not have two sides, explain the problem, discuss the (economic) implications, propose a solution, and discuss the (economic) implications (maybe pros and cons, or costs and benefits) or the proposed solution.

Cite and include the **two** sources you used to support your points: title of the article, the publisher (where you got it from), and the url if you accessed it online.

Some potential sources to start from: New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, FiveThirtyEight, Krugman's Blog, Mankiw's Blog (and other blogs by economists), Econofact.org, The Economist, The Atlantic, The Brookings Institute, etc., etc., etc.

Your grade is based on the following:

- 5 points: economic *for* argument (benefits)
- 5 points: economic *against* argument (costs)
- points will be taken away for non-economic arguments either for or against (or bad economics, i.e. using concepts from class incorrectly), and poorly communicated ideas (i.e. using correct grammar, spell-checking, using complete sentences).
- Using microeconomic principles (this isn't a macro class)

## Topic List

1. **Data property rights.** When we use services like Facebook or the keychain scanner for discounts at Ingles (or other supermarkets), the company is collecting data. Data on our likes and dislikes, how long we are on the webpage, what products we shop for, what items we buy, and the list goes on. Companies collect this data and sell it to advertisers, or anyone willing to pay for it (NY Times article on Facebook: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/technology/facebook-privacy-hearings.html>). The European Union recently (as far as policy goes); set standards for data protection (<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/01/facebook-ceo-zuckerbergs-call-for-gdpr-privacy-laws-raises-questions.html>) which gives users the right to have their data deleted, and explicit, informed consent for a company to collect data (notice how sites now ask if they can collect cookies). The US has no such policy.

Argue the case for and against stronger data privacy laws (like the similar laws in the EU, Brazil, Latin America, and Africa). Though not necessary, your argument may be helped by investigating 'property rights' and the 'Coase theorem.' If property rights are not well-defined (who actually owns *your* data?), we have issues like this.

2. **4-day work week.** Many companies domestically and globally, like [Shake Shack](#), are moving to a 4-day work week citing increased productivity. Why might a firm see this occur (think back to our chapter on Output and Costs)? What are the costs and benefits to a firm that moves to a 4-day work week?

Alternatively, you can talk about a 4-day school week. Some school districts are experimenting with a 4-day school week for K-12 education. Again, discuss the pros and cons of this decision.

3. **'Free' college tuition.** Prospective University of Tennessee students coming from households with less than \$50,000 annual income will soon be able to attend a [UT campus tuition free](#). In 11 other states (maybe soon 20), programs are available that provide free tuition to earn an [associate degree or other vocation program](#). Some presidential candidates are proposing programs to go further. Discuss the pros and cons of these programs (you can pick one if you want). You can also propose your own amendment to these programs that might improve them, but be specific about the potential costs and benefits of your amendment.
4. **Wild Card.** If there is a topic you care about, write about it. If you want to 'OK' it with me ahead of time, send me a proposal: a one paragraph explanation of the problem, like the above topic suggestions. You can support your topic proposal by sending me a news article to go along with it.
5. **Covid-19.** This is a big topic, but the pandemic has impacted all of our lives. So, the temptation to write on this is real. If you choose to write about the subject, pick

something specific: mask wearing and social distancing, economic impacts of virtual schooling (K-12), etc. Be specific and don't hesitate to ask questions if you are unsure.