San José State University
Department of Economics
ECON 109: Analysis of Economic Issues for Teachers
Spring 2026

Instructor:	James (Steve) O'Brien
Email:	james.obrien@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Thursday 1:30pm-2:30pm (by appointment)
Class Days/Times:	Tuesday and Thursday 10:30am-11:45am
Classroom:	Clark Building 308
Prerequisites:	Upper division standing.

Note: Not acceptable for Economics majors, except double majors; acceptable for Economics minors. Please contact me with any questions.

Course Description

Economic analysis of topics such as unemployment, inflation, poverty, pollution, education and international trade will be covered within the context of K-12 education.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. CLO 1 <u>Comparative Advantage</u>: Define and appreciate the critical role of specialization and how it contributes to gains from trade and globalization.
2. CLO 2 <u>Supply and Demand</u>: Apply the notion that economics is about the allocation of scarce resources, that scarcity forces choice, tradeoffs exist and that every choice has an opportunity cost.
3. CLO 3 Develop the ability to relate basic <u>Macro Economic</u> concepts to the world around us
4. CLO 4 Develop the ability to relate basic <u>Micro Economic</u> concepts to the world around us

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

Modern Principles of Economics by Tyler Cowen and Alex Tabarrok (2nd, 3rd or 4th Edition)

This textbook is available for rental as well as purchase from many different sources. I would recommend browsing Amazon. Access to the textbook is a requirement for this course, and questions for quizzes and exams will include information from the readings.

Other Readings

I will post or link any additional readings on the Canvas course website.

Canvas: the learning management system will be the central online communication hub for the class. Recorded lectures, power point presentations, grades, additional readings and messages related to class will be posted through the Canvas system. You will access Canvas using your SJSU login and password at https://sjsu.instructure.com.
Please be sure that your email is listed correctly or you risk missing key information communicated throughout the semester.

Course Requirements and Assignments

You will need access to a computer/laptop/tablet with reliable wireless connection. Most assignments will be completed/submitted through Canvas.

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf

NOTE that University policy F69-24 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf states that "Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading."
Note that "All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades." See University Policy F13-1 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf for more details.

Grading Policy

Your grade in this course consists of two midterms, one final exam, ten-in-class quizzes (out of twelve possible scores) and a course prep project. The midterms and final exam cover material presented both in class and in the textbook. Quizzes will cover both lecture and reading materials. Twelve quizzes will be offered, of which, your ten best scores will count toward your grade. These quizzes will be excellent preparation for questions on the midterms and the final exam.

Your final grade will be based on the following categories and weights:

Quizzes	20%
Midterm 1	20%
Midterm 2	20%
Class Project	15%
Final Exam	25%

Your final numerical grade will be the weighted average of your scores in the above categories, and your corresponding letter grade will be assigned as follows:

Percent	Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent	Grade
97.5% to 100%	A+	93% to 97.49%	A	90% to 92.9%	A-
87.5% to 89.9%	B+	83% to 87.49%	B	80% to 82.9%	B-
77.5% to 79.9%	C+	73% to 77.49%	C	70% to 72.9%	C-
67.5% to 69.9%	D+	63% to 67.49%	D	60% to 62.9%	D-
0% to 59.9%	F				

Classroom Protocol

Please act respectfully both in class as well as all online forums; zoom meetings, Canvas messaging, etc…

University Policies

General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU's policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. See University Policy S90–5 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf. More detailed information on a variety of related topics is available in the SJSU catalog, at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not serve to address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as a next step.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's Catalog Policies section at http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current

academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The [Late Drop Policy](#) is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/**.** Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](#) at http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

Academic integrity

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](#) at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](#) is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](#) (AEC) at http://www.sjsu.edu/aec to establish a record of their disability.

<u>ECON 109, Spring 2026 Course Schedule</u>

*Schedule is subject to change but only with plenty of notice
*Chapter Numbers may not be the same in your textbook, depending on edition. Please focus on chapter titles/topics.

Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1 (1/22)	Introduction and Course Overview
2 (1/27)	Cowen/Tabarrok (CT) Ch. 1-2, Economic Ideas, Trade, Comparative Advantage
2	CT Ch. 3 Supply and Demand
3 (2/3)	CT Ch. 3 Supply and Demand (continued)
3	CT Ch. 4 Equilibrium and Prices
4 (2/10)	CT. Ch. 4 Equilibrium and Prices
4	CT Ch. 5 Price Ceilings and Floors

Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
5 (2/17)	CT Ch. 6-7 GDP and Economic Growth
5	CT Ch. 6-7 GDP and Economic Growth
6 (2/24)	CT Ch. 9-10 Savings, Investment and the Financial System
6	CT Ch. 11 Unemployment and Labor Force Participation
7 (3/3)	CT Ch. 11 (Continued)
7	Review for Midterm 1
8 (3/10)	**MIDTERM 1**
8	Go over Midterm and begin Inflation **Discuss Class Project**
9 (3/17)	CT Ch. 12 Inflation and the Quantity Theory of Money
9	CT Ch. 12 (Continued)
10 (3/24)	CT Ch. 13 Business Fluctuations: Aggregate Demand and Supply
10	CT Ch. 13 (Continued)
3/30-4/3	**SPRINGS BREAK**
11 (4/9)	CT Ch. 15 The Federal Reserve System
11	CT Ch. 15 (Continued)
12 (4/14)	CT Ch. 33 Monetary Policy
12 (4/16)	**MIDTERM 2**
13 (4/23)	CT Ch. 17 The Federal Budget: Taxes and Spending **CLASS PROJECT DUE**
13	CT Ch. 18 Fiscal Policy
14 (4/28)	CT Ch. 17-18 (Continued)
14	CT Ch. 19 International Trade
15 (5/5)	CT Ch. 19 (Continued)
15	CT Ch. 21 Political Economy and Public Choice
Final Exam	**FINAL EXAM** **THURSDAY MAY 14** **10:45AM-12:45PM**