**Fishbowl Discussion Topics, Discussion Points, and Required Materials**

In order to provide real-world context to the theoretical subject matter we are learning in class, students will periodically be assigned break-out groups to conduct focus research, synthesize data, and draw substantial conclusions about prominent issues that make up the current economic debate in public policy.

**Fishbowl Procedure (In Class):**

* Each group will have a total of 25 minutes to present their findings. The general course of events will proceed as follows: introduction to subject by providing economic and historical context to the issue, present the contemporary perspectives on the issue at hand (if we are talking solutions than present solutions, if we’re talking issue/non-issue present the rationale behind those assertions), then each person will present the information they found to be most enlightening/essential/confusing within the context of the topic (this is where individual grades will be derived from), and finally each person will present their conclusion to the group and provide supporting evidence for their assertion.
* This is not a debate necessarily. You should provide evidence for all perspectives, but ultimately try and justify the perspective that you have formed as a result of your research.

**Materials to Submit (Part of Grade):**

1. Each individual must submit a works cited page that includes brief annotations for each source utilized in your research (if you are unsure what an annotated bibliography is, please come see me). About 5 sources is adequate, 8-10 represents strong and considerate research.
2. An “Intrigue Journal” that the student uses to compile the 10 most interesting, controversial, or resonant ideas you found throughout your research. The “Intrigue Journal” will be a bi-fold (think pamphlet) with the research excerpts on the left hand side of the journal and your reaction to each of the 10 excerpts on the corresponding side on the right of the document. At the bottom of the “Intrigue Journal” you should formulate a 200 word minimum conclusion that reflects your reaction to your research (did your opinion change/discover any enlightening information) and your newly formed opinion on the issue your group researched (*Sample provided below*).

**Grading:**

Fishbowl (in class presentation)…………………………………………………………………………..... /20

* All persons in group active in discussion and make significant contributions as a result of meticulous research
* Perspectives and data presented are factual and from reliable, scholarly sources
* Discussion follows a logical pattern where all ideas are considered and weighed against one another leading to the ultimate formation of strong conclusions

“Intrigue Journal” & Annotated Bibliography ………………………………………………………. /20

* Strong portfolio of academic sources that have detailed descriptions and provide insight to the information gleaned from that particular source
* Journal provides clear insight as to the meaningful synthesis and analysis of scholarly research (10 entries in journal minimum)
* Conclusion represents your personal reflection on findings and how those findings have affected your personal opinion of the issue, as well as what that opinion now is

**Fishbowl Topics and Discussion Points:**

1. (**Topic A**) Globalization and Trade: Help or Hurt the World’s Poor?
   1. Does opening up developing nations to international investment from the developed world create a pathway to growth or fuel the cycle of exploitation of resource rich nations?
      1. Required Reading: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/does-globalization-help-o-2006-04/>
2. (**Topic B/E**) Keynesian vs. Classical Economic Theory: Best course of action?
   1. The two dominant theories of macroeconomics both surmise that any economy can obtain full employment; however, the attainment of full employment could not be achieved in more different ways depending on the approach one takes. In this discussion, research groups should focus on the strengths, weaknesses, historical examples, and expert testimony to answer the ultimate Macro question: Keynes or classical?
      1. Consider: debt, short vs. long run, international interest rates

1. (**Topic C**) The United States $18 Trillion Debt: Issue or Non-Issue?
   1. The infamous figure, $18,000,000,000, which the United States government owes to its domestic and international holders of debt. The real issue at hand is not how did we get to this point, but what should be done in response to this persistent issue. You will explore the diverse and conflicting ideology on how this looming debt should be handled and the differing opinions on its implications for the United States as a world power.
      1. Consider: who holds the debt, international interest rates, cost/benefits of austerity, cost/benefits of debt, solutions to reducing
      2. Reading: <http://www.cfr.org/financial-crises/dangerous-us-government-debt/p22408>
2. (**Topic D**) Trans-Pacific Partnership: Deal or No Deal?
   1. This international proposal is/was highly debated during its presence in Washington: many different interest groups, political parties, and individuals asserted many different possible conclusions as a result of this bill’s adoption, some good some bad. You are to wade through the conflicting data and arrive at a conclusion about the international trade deal and its consequences on American families and workers.
      1. Consider: trade theory, manufacturing sector, unemployment, social welfare
      2. Reading: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21654612-row-over-pacific-trade-deal-harming-americas-economic-and-political-interests-tpp-rip>
3. (**Topic F**) Contemporary Issues in the U.S. Labor Market (Each person will be assigned a specialization within the topic)
   1. Unions: should they be supported or abolished?
   2. Federal Minimum Wage: is it viable?
   3. Gender Pay Gap: issue worth solving?
      1. Within each focus area, you should focus on the theory behind the proposed solutions/issues at hand. Please focus on the guiding question in relation to each sub-topic to ensure the discussion is focused and concise. Within this topic lies the greatest pool of information to be examined, therefore doing your role within your group is essential for the group’s success. Once the basic ideology behind the opposing perspectives is shared, please disclose the prominent information you collected that most influenced your conclusion.
4. (**Topic G**) Pollution Solutions: How should the world tackle it’s addiction to CO2 emissions?
   1. The lack of a global consensus on how to curb our rapidly increasing CO2 emissions has led many groups and institutions, including the United Nations and Pope Francis, to push for a plan to create a livable climate in the future. There are many proposed solutions to this problem, however, nothing that has wide enough support to spur a worldwide movement to end the dangerous levels of CO2 being emitted into our atmosphere. You should examine the potential solutions, their viability on a global scale, their strengths and weaknesses, and implications on our planet if there is no action is taken in order to draw a conclusion on the best course of action.
      1. Suggested Reading: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1529business_1may_air.pdf>, <http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en>

1. (**Topic H**) Income Inequality: Solutions moving forward?
   1. Probably the most widely discussed issue relating to contemporary economics is the divergence of the wealthiest Americans from the lowest quartile of the population, many of whom live well below the poverty line. The challenge has been made by many liberals that the middle class has vanished, the traditional methods of upward mobility have been erased, and a movement to curb this pattern must be adopted for the sake of the health of our nation. You should research the underlying issues of the wealth inequality debate. Think about the economic theory behind household consumption, tax policy, and means by which a solution is possible. Your research should inform your classmates about the perspectives on wealth inequality, the facts behind the issue (try and find the ones that are not traditional talking points that everyone already knows), and draw a conclusion on the best methods for working to eliminate this gap, if your research tells you it should be eliminated.
      1. Suggested Reading: <http://inequality.org/income-inequality/>, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/07/inequality-joblessness-are-top-threats-in-2015-world-economic-forum-experts-say/>, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/catherine-rampell-republicans-have-started-to-care-about-income-inequality/2015/01/22/f1ee7686-a276-11e4-903f-9f2faf7cd9fe_story.html>

Sample “Intrigue Journal”





Reaction/Conclusion: 200 word minimum…