



# WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1

*« Nothing in Nature is random.*

*A thing appears random only through the incompleteness of our knowledge. »*

– Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)

## QUESTION 1 (½ - 1 page; no references required)

What is economics? Without using external definitions or semantic analysis, give your own subjective definition of what economics is about.

## QUESTION 2 (1-1½ pages; references required)

Following the logic of *The Economics Anti-textbook* (2010), evaluate the legitimacy of two microeconomics concepts encountered in the lectures and affiliated literature. Either defend or criticize the concepts using practical examples that discredit or validate their theoretical basis. The following is a non-exhaustive list of possible concepts to choose from; however, feel free to select other concepts that are not listed below.

- scarcity principle
- efficiency principle
- cost-benefit principle
- comparative advantage
- opportunity cost
- equilibrium principle



### QUESTION 3 (1- 1½ pages; references required)

Find a case in history where the economy has not functioned as expected and resulted in economic, social or environmental crisis (Subprime crisis, Eurocrisis, Deep Horizon oil spill, Chilean student revolts, etc.). In what ways did this case in reality relate to inadequate economic theories or ideologies? Describe the ‘mistakes’ that have been made both on the theoretical side and on the practical implementation of it. What could have been done differently?

### QUESTION 4 (1 - 1½ pages or alternative media; no references required)

Charles Darwin (1881) used to say that his mind seemed to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. In the spirit of Charles Darwin, you will try to think as an ‘economic naturalist’ and pose an original question relating to some pattern of events or behaviour that you personally have observed. Using principles discussed in the course (literature and lectures; see also the list provided in QUESTION 2), provide an economic explanation for the observed phenomenon.

For instance (extracted from Robert H. Frank, *The Economic Naturalist*; 2007):

- Why is it easier to find a partner when you already have one?
- Why is milk sold in rectangular containers, while soft drinks are sold in round ones?
- Why are portraits on coins done in profile while those on paper money are in full face?
- Why are whales in danger of extinction, but not chickens?
- Why is it legal to drive while eating a burger but not while talking on a mobile phone?
- Why do lawyers spend more on cars and clothing than professors with the same income?
- Why are pedestrians fined for jaywalking in Rome but not in New York?

For this question only (QUESTION 4), you will have the option to use a different format of expression. You are free to choose amongst the following medias:

- write a classical 1-1½ page essay
- make a Youtube video
- make an animation (RSA style, Prezi, Powerpoint with narration)



## INSTRUCTIONS

- Size: 12. Spacing: 1.5. Font: Times New Roman. Margins: 25mm
- All four questions must be answered (min. 3.5 – max. 5.5 pages)
- Write your name on top of every page
- Name the file in the following way : firstname.lastname1 (ex : john.galt1.doc)
- Upload the file on the *File Area* titled *Writing Assignment 1* on [Studentportalen](#)
- **Deadline** : 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012, 23:59

## REFERENCES

- Use *at least* 2 different references for both question 2 and question 3, from varying sources of the course literature. You can also refer to lectures and other literature in addition to this. References are not required for questions 1 and 4 but can be used if you wish.
- Make sure to make it very clear to the reader when you express your own ideas and opinions, and when you refer to sources and other people's opinions or research.
- You must use the [Harvard Referencing System](#) and include page numbers ; for example, (Smith, 1776, p.245).

## GRADING CRITERIAS

1. **Clarity**; the language must be clear, understandable and at a sufficiently high university standard. The questions must be entirely answered.
2. **Argumentation**; if argumentation is part of the assignment, the arguments must be relevant, important and adequate.
3. **Academic**; research methods and resources must be anchored in scientific and analytical sources.
4. **References**; references must be properly used and done according to the instructions above throughout the paper.