



**ISSUES IN POLITICAL ECONOMY**  
Undergraduate Student Research in Economics

**Volume 25**  
**July 2016**

**Editor**

Rob Wimberly

**Associate Editors**

Ameya Benegal, Edward Cooley, Ashley Rowles, Rebecca Sansale,  
Justin Schweitzer, Sophia Therriault, Stephanie Tizik

**Reviewers**

Patrick Barnes, Alexzandra Battaglia, Rudolph Biagi, Andrew Brazel,  
Alexander Butler, James Chadwick, Cameron Douglass, Logan Drew,  
Liam Dugan, Michael Faircloth, Benjamin Foshee, Atticus Grinder,  
Christopher Grippo, Michael Keenan, William Kenyon, Sarah Krulewitz,  
Samantha Lutz, Danae MacLeod, Bernardo Missura,  
Kaitlyn Mulder, Kristina Parrett, Jacqueline Peifer, Carolyn Powell,  
Jeremy Revelise, Derek Sims, Stephen Taliadoros, John Taylor,  
Matthew VanDerveer

**Elon University**

**University of Mary Washington**

## Mission Statement

*Issues in Political Economy* is committed to supporting and encouraging quality undergraduate research in all areas of economics. The Journal was founded on the belief that the best way to learn economics is to do economics. Through the process of research, writing, and peer review, students actively engage the discipline in a way not possible by simply listening to lectures and reading textbooks. In short, undergraduate research is a vital component in an economics education. The literature suggests that students take projects more seriously and learn more when the project is directed towards an external rather than an internal audience such as a class assignment. *IPE* is designed to provide an external audience for such research.

*Issues in Political Economy* is edited and refereed entirely by students, with oversight from faculty at Elon University and University of Mary Washington. In order to maintain quality and objectivity, we follow a double-blind review process. The only requirements for submission are that the article pertains to some aspect of economics, that it was written during undergraduate study, and that it be submitted through a faculty sponsor. Though submissions on all topics in economics will receive consideration, papers should be analytical and seek to add new understanding to the topic

For additional information please visit our website <http://www.elon.edu/ipe>

### Faculty Sponsors:

Steven A. Greenlaw  
Professor of Economics  
University of Mary Washington  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401  
Email : [sgreenlaw@umw.edu](mailto:sgreenlaw@umw.edu)

Stephen B. DeLoach  
Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
Elon University  
Elon, NC 27244  
Email: [deloach@elon.edu](mailto:deloach@elon.edu)

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

*Issues in Political Economy* began over a decade ago with the goal of developing a forum to further the understanding of economics among undergraduate students. The original journal was conceived and cultivated by dedicated students and faculty at Bellarmine College in Louisville, Kentucky.

In 1999, Elon University and the University of Mary Washington inherited the sponsorship and editorial responsibilities of *Issues in Political Economy*. Since then, *IPE* has gained international recognition as one of only two undergraduate research journals, and has received submissions from all over the world.

The IPE not only focuses on promoting undergraduate research, but also is a student lead incentive. While faculty oversees the project, an editorial team of senior economic majors primarily leads the journal. Students review all submissions and the final decision-making rests in the hands of the editorial team.

We would like to thank Dr. Steve DeLoach from Elon University and Dr. Steven Greenlaw from the University of Mary Washington for their guidance and support. These faculty members steered much of the process, and the final result would not be possible without them.

The Journal also sponsors an undergraduate session every year, typically in conjunction with the Annual Eastern Economics Association Conference. This year's 23rd annual IPE Conference was held in Washington, D.C. and was a great success, hosting many student papers and allowing students to serve as session chairs and discussants. We would also encourage any future submitters to consider presenting at the conference as well as submitting to the Journal, as the experience of a live presentation is not something to ignore.

It is our hope that each year's *Issues in Political Economy* will build upon the success of the past and continue to be a creative and beneficial journal for all involved.

Rob Wimberly  
2016 Editors

## FOREWORD

James Gamble of the University of Missouri examines whether capital punishment deters would-be murderers. Previous literature had claimed that for every one execution, eight lives are saved; however, Gamble's research casts doubt on that figure. By using a fixed effects estimator Gamble estimates that only one life is saved for every twenty eight executions, which demonstrates that the death penalty has a weak deterrent effect. This weak deterrent effect would seem to indicate that either most murderers in states that maintain the death penalty assess a low probability of being convicted or that very few of Nobel Laureate Gary Becker's "rational criminals" are murderers.

This issue's second paper, written by William Kenyon of Elon University, seeks to update the literature on the effect of European colonization. Drawing heavily on Robin Grier's seminal "Colonial legacies and economic growth," which found that economic growth in former Spanish colonies lagged behind other formerly colonized lands, Kenyon uses a Generalized Least Squares regression to find that when additional years are added to Grier's dataset the difference between Spanish and non-Spanish colonies diminishes. This suggests that globalization has positively impacted former Spanish colonies in Latin America through increased intra-regional trade.

Using 2013 data from the Federal Government's Institute of Museum and Library Services, a cross-sectional dataset encompassing over 9,000 public library districts, Dirk Jasperse of Minnesota State University Moorhead investigates the effect of attendance at library-hosted children's programs on the circulation of library materials. While evidence had previously suggested that regular use of the library increased the time children spend reading by an average of 27 minutes, this paper is the first empirical paper dedicated to evaluating the importance of children's program attendance. The implications of these results hold special significance for local libraries and school districts seeking to increase child literacy.

Our fourth paper is by Jhoan Osorno of Siena College. Osorno seeks to explain drug addiction through the use of the Neuroeconomic Drift Diffusion model. By accounting for inconsistent consumer preferences, through hyperbolic discounting, Osorno is able to mathematically model and thereby explain why certain drug users become addicted while others do not. Osorno's findings point toward a more effective policy framework that seeks to divert resources from recreational drug users toward treating those showing severe symptoms of addiction.

Finally, Lauren Gabbard of Northern Kentucky University inquires into the efficacy of Supplemental Instruction led by undergraduate students. Gabbard creates an experiment in which the final grades of principles of microeconomics students that attended Supplemental Instruction are compared to their peers. Gabbard's experiment raises important questions regarding the usefulness of traditional "chalk and talk" style economics classes and presents a comprehensive literature review which strongly supports active and cooperative learning methods, especially at the principles level.

Rob Wimberly