



ISSUES IN POLITICAL ECONOMY
Undergraduate Student Research in Economics

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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>

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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. Amrita Dhar 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 28th annual IPE Conference was held in New York City, NY 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 out of 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.

Co-editors

James Grant, Elon University
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FOREWORD

Zachary Cheek from the University of Nebraska explores how increases in Afghan opium production impact prescription opioid and heroin abuse in the United States. Through rigorous analysis, Cheek reveals a significant association between opium cultivation, lower drug prices, increased abuse risks, and higher death rates. The findings emphasize the urgent need for interventions to address the devastating consequences of Afghan opium cultivation on American communities.

Hugh O'Reilly from Manchester University examines the impact of India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) on the accumulation of productive, physical assets. By analyzing nationally representative data and employing a difference-in-difference model, O'Reilly finds that the scheme has modestly increased productive asset ownership for participant households, particularly non-poor households. However, the effects on households below the poverty line are not statistically significant. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable benefits from workfare programs and sustainable poverty reduction in rural areas.

Prajjwal Dhungana from the Kathmandu University School of Arts investigates the relationship between climate change and Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in Nepal. By analyzing data from a baseline survey and daily climate data provided by NASA, Dhungana employs a log-linear cross-sectional regression model to estimate the impact of weather conditions on MSW. The study reveals that average temperature and total precipitation of the same year are negatively associated with MSW, while those of the following year are directly related. The findings highlight the need for swift adaptation of MSW management policies to address the effects of climate change. Further research utilizing comprehensive datasets and cross-country studies is recommended to enhance understanding in this area.

William Gu from Princeton University investigates the effect of delaying high school morning start times on graduation rates. Using observational data from over 460 public four-year high schools across 31 states over the past decade, the study employs event study methodology and difference-in-differences models. The results show a negative correlation between delayed start times and graduation outcomes, with varying effects depending on the length of the delay. The implications of statewide legislation mandating delayed start times, as seen in California and New Jersey, are discussed. The study sheds light on the importance of sleep for teenagers and the need for comprehensive approaches to address sleep deprivation in high school students.

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