Hey …,

Here's the cheat sheet for ECON 305 and 317 and CLAS 320. As always, do not hesitate to ask for help (especially if anything below doesn't make sense); and if you encounter any particularly odd, interesting (for better or worse) or surprising responses, please let me know. Also, essays 6 and 7 are new this year, so you might want to take a look at those when the time comes.

Good luck with grading!

-jake.

jjpeters@usc.edu
JEP Office Hours Monday 10-2, Wednesday 10-2

A Few Tips for Grading

For each question, I have provided you with definitions of terms, my expectations for the academic content of responses, and the occasional editorial. When you read this “cheat sheet,” keep in mind that it provides only general guidelines and not absolute requirements for responses.

While there is room for a wide range of responses, a good response to a Reflective Question should consistently do three things:

1. answer the question
2. contain references to class materials, such as readings and lectures. (Note that the Reflective Questions at the beginning of the semester are mostly descriptive and do not ask students to make an explicit link to course material. Later in the semester, the Reflective Questions become more academic. And for some RQ sets this doesn’t apply.)
3. contain references to the student’s experience in the community (e.g., excerpts from interactions or observations with students). There is room here for a “personal” (or journal-like) response, as well.

It should be fairly easy to determine if these key elements are part of a student’s response. If any part is missing, the response is unbalanced and you should let the student know what s/he needs to do to balance future responses. Be sure to give students positive reinforcement as well as constructive criticism – always providing a path for improvement.

If any of this doesn't make sense, or have any troubles with grading, just ask! I'm available over email anytime or at the JEP house. And if you can't make my office hours, email me and we'll set up a time.
ESSAY TWO: Assessing your Plan  
(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 2/21) 

The goal of this essay is to help you figure out how to build a cohesive plan for the following weeks and anticipate any issues you might encounter. What are the major themes in your economics course that you plan to emphasize throughout the following weeks? How are you going to put these themes together into an economics mini-course? That is, explain how each week will build on the last and explain how you think students will be able to learn the larger lessons about the economics that you want to develop with course. The most important themes are often the most difficult to address, so pick one major theme that you think will be particularly challenging to address over the coming weeks and explain 1) why you think it will be difficult; 2) why you think it is an important theme; and 3) what varying strategies you will use over the course of the next few weeks to make this theme meaningful for your students.

PA KEY:

Since the main question asks students to step back and think about the major themes in their course, you should begin to notice much more emphasis on course content in this week’s journal responses. Answers to this question are going to vary widely. Encourage students to back up their claims with evidence from the course lectures, books, discussions, etc. For example, if a student says, “it seems like X and Y are at the heart of every lecture,” encourage him or her to back up their claim by asking “why is that?” The goal of this week it to get students thinking about how the 7 weeks will come together into a meaningful course, not just a collection of lessons. The other goal is to get students to anticipate problems they might have – if you see possible issues that the students don't, let them know. Grading this journal will mostly come down to effort, how well the student comes up with something that sounds like a cohesive course and how reflective the student is about potential problems.

Some students will spend most of their time reflecting on how they are translating complicated college concepts into age-appropriate material. This is a fine way to approach the question, as talking about issues of translating course themes for K-12 students is still ultimately talking about the themes in the course.

Note that responses to this question will also give you some interesting information regarding how the teams are working (or not working) together. For example, you should be concerned if most of the students in one team respond that they are emphasizing the study of one thing, but one sole person writes that the team is discussing something else every week; this situation could indicate that one member of the team is not actively participating in the planning meetings as he/she should be! Remember, if you notice any problems with your team, please notify Brenda immediately.

ESSAY THREE – The Team  
(1 page, 10 points, due: 3/7) 

Describe your impressions of your mini-course team. How well are you gelling as a team?
What strengths do you think each member brings to the table? What weaknesses are you concerned about, if any? How do you think about your own role in the team? That is, what strengths and weaknesses do you bring and what skills would you like to develop?

**PA KEY:**

Responses to this question should be relatively straightforward. The goal here is to have your students identify any problems so they can be nipped in the bud early in the semester. In addition, it encourages the students to consider the individual contributions and group dynamics present in their team so they might build on the team’s strengths.

This question may require some follow-up on your part to meet with individual team members or with an entire team to address any problems identified in the students’ journals. The challenge in the latter case is to maintain confidentiality (i.e., ensuring the privacy of each student’s journal) while also addressing problems directly and proactively.

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**FOR ECON 317 :: ESSAY FOUR – Race/ethnicity and Inequality in Schools (2 pages, 20 points, due: 3/21)**

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<tr>
<td>%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Am (not Hispanic)</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (not Hispanic)</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple or No Response</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil : Teacher ratio</td>
<td>21:1</td>
<td>21:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average class size</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Year Drop out rate (%)</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Students Per computer</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% students receiving free or reduced price meals</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% students receiving CalWorks (welfare)*</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>18.1</td>
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</tbody>
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*Source: LAUSD and the California Department of Education

*Source: 2000 US Census Data

What do the data in the table indicate about the relative status of students in the Los Angeles Unified School District, compared to the student population at the County and State levels?
Go to the California Department of Education website and look up information about your JEP site:

[http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/](http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/)

(If you are at a non-LAUSD school site, use “Vermont Avenue Elementary,” one of the USC “family of schools”)

- For box #1 select “school”
- For box #2 select “create your own report” at the bottom of the drop down list
- Click the “submit” button
- Check the boxes for relevant School Data, such as class size and pupil-teacher ratio, Socioeconomic Indicators, the Student Data for African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and whites and any other variables that interest you.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and make sure that the correct school is highlighted in the Select Agency box.
  (See note below.)
  - Click “Submit”

(Note that not all data points are available for all school for all years. Also, you can change the year to see change over time and to see if data is available for different years)

Look at the information provided about the school. How does the school compare on the socioeconomic and educational issues summarized in the table above? What other interesting information do you find? Based on your knowledge of the neighborhood what do you think might account for any discrepancies that exist between the school and the LAUSD as a whole? What sort of data would you need to have to provide evidence for your explanation of the discrepancies?

PA KEY:

We've used a version of this question many times, and one of the problem with the question is that students do not think much about the statistics themselves. Very simply, my hope with this question is that students actually interrogate the stats, thing about the relationship between the numbers and the people's lives they represent. There will likely be a wide variety of answers to the last two bold question and I imagine this is where you will sort out the outstanding responses form the adequate, especially the very last question. I'm quite curious what students will come up with, but hopefully after half a semester of thinking about stats and data they'll have something interesting. It might take reading a few of these to get a feel for the possible range of answers.

**FOR ECON 305 :: ESSAY FOUR – Externalities**  
*(2 pages, 20 points, due: 3/21)*

As you know, externalities are outcomes (positive and negative) of an economic activity that are not taken into account by those engaged in the given activity, and that affect people, places and environments somehow considered “outside” the activity. For example, the environmental costs of producing and consuming the dozens of cell phones you may own in your lifetime are externalized to the environments, health, and lives of people who live, work and play at or near the raw material extraction sites (mines), manufacturing plants, as well as dumps and electronic-waste processing facilities primarily located outside of the US. Your challenge for this essay is to apply the logic of externalities to the education system. Take a look at this California Department of Education news release about budget cuts:

[http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr10/yr10rel34.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr10/yr10rel34.asp)
What externalities involved in public K-12 education funding are implicated by the CDE news release? What are some externalities not addressed by the CDE in this document? Think about time (the long-term and short-term effects of budget planning) as well as place (Who is impacted where? Are there outcomes outside of CA?) in your response. Make sure to use a detailed example based on your experience at your JEP site in your response. And make sure to ground your example in your observations – although you may end up speculating about positive and negative externalities that have effects in places and times outside of your experience.

PA KEY:
There are tons of externalities to education funding – anything from health / physical education that leads to a population that takes care of itself better and decreases the cost of health care to an overcrowded classrooms leading to situations where teachers can't pay attention to students are dropout rates increase, which can lead to an unskilled workforce and contribute to poverty, which has high costs for governments/taxpayers. As in my two examples above, there is likely to be a lot of speculation (there's certainly some truth to the above, but there are also other externalities to the examples I listed and other possible outcomes; and its possible that such considerations are taken to account in the budget process). So in grading these responses I would reward the students who can think broadly about externalities and make connections to all kinds of different costs (ones directly monetized or not). As usual, the excellent responses will be the ones who can connect the externalities they are discussing to some actual example based in their JEP experience. This is not going to be easy – moving from the very abstract and general to a very specific (personal, in a particular place, etc.) example can lead to some gross generalizations about the people and places in which the JEP student is working. So keep an eye out for responses that do something like move from my example above about poverty to an example such as “and the students I am working with are poor and have overcrowded classrooms.” Aside from the difficulty in assessing whether or not a student comes from a household below the poverty line, there is not evidence of any causal relation, not to mention that it would make no sense that a student's crowded classroom would make her parents poor. Hopefully you won't have any examples as bad as that one and hopefully there will some interesting examples of externalities.

FOR ECON 317 :: ESSAY FIVE – The “Value-Added” Controversy
(2 pages, 20 points, due: 4/4)
For this essay you will use your statistics skills to evaluate a real example of the use of statistics that affects the schools, teachers and students in LA: the presentation and analysis of data in the recent “Value-Added” controversy in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Even if you are familiar with the issue, read the LA Times “what is value added” FAQ, paying close attention to how the statistics are generated and used:

http://projects.latimes.com/value-added/faq/#what_is_value_added

First, based on your knowledge of statistics, what do you think are the merits and problems of using this particular analysis of test scores to evaluate teachers and schools? Make sure to use course concepts to explain your reasoning. Second, based on your experience in the classroom,
with students and teachers, what other statistics do you think are important to consider in evaluating teachers and schools? Think about what you have seen that might be missed by the value-added analysis and then sketch out: 1) What would your statistical tool evaluate? 2) What data would you need? 3) How would you collect that data? And finally, like any good statistician, explain the limits of your statistics (i.e. what is not captured by the data).

PA KEY:

This is a controversial issue, and hopefully most of your students have heard something about it. Take a look at the LA Times link above, just to have an idea of what everyone is reading—its actually a pretty decent explanation of how that tool works and the sort of data it is capable of generating. Answers to the first bold question will likely vary widely (and likely vary by the students own opinion of using "value-added" evaluation tools for teachers). This is fine, as long as they made a decent evaluation of the tool. The last two bold questions are the important ones, especially the task of thinking about what other statistics would be useful for evaluating teachers and school. Responses might not be super creative, but I'd hope some students come up with interesting ideas—don't worry if the ideas are impractical or far-fetched, this is a change for students to think broadly about the sort of information that would help fairly or reasonably evaluate teachers.

FOR ECON 305 :: ESSAY FIVE – Economic Theory and Complexity
(2 pages, 20 points, due: 4/4)

Economic theory is based in a set of core assumptions about the behaviors and choices that human beings will make in the aggregate. Although everyday life and the reasons that people make choices are often far more complex than any given economic theory accounts for, every theory attempts to account for complexity as best as possible. Pick one theoretical concept from your economics course and apply it to some event that involves a form of economic decision-making that you have witnessed at your JEP site. This application of theory requires that you 1) define the theory or concept; 2) use a clear and well explained example from your JEP site to evaluate the theory; 3) analyze how the concept can explain the event or behavior you are describing; and finally, 4) think broadly about the complexity of people's everyday lives and analyze the limits of this concept. What does the theory not take into account (i.e. what is bracketed)? How does the theory attempt to account for complexity? Finally, discuss any issues do you think might arise if economic theory does not account for complexity.

PA KEY:

I'm sure you'll be able to grade the content of these responses far better than I – but don't worry too much if students do not demonstrate a great understanding of the concept they choose. Grade based on how well they apply the concept to an event that involves economic decision making (of course, if the response is way off base on how the concept works, thats another story, as they won't be able to apply it very well). Hopefully everyone will get the first two numbered requirements down just fine, outstanding responses should distinguish themselves on the third and fourth requirements. Students who can take you through how the theory helps them make sense of how people make an actual decision (rather than just how the theory works in the abstract) will
likely write excellent responses. Hopefully such analysis will lead to thinking about how an actual moment of decision making might be far more complex than the theory takes into account. This is by no means a failing of a theory or concept, my hope with this question is to get students thinking about the disconnect between economic theory that is used to explain large trends in markets and the actual choices that people make (which taken together, create a market). I'm not sure where students will go with the last bold question, so be generous on the last part. This one might be hard to grade, so feel free to ask me for help … or to let me know where my assumptions about what is taught in ECON 303/305 are wrong!

ESSAY SIX – Town and Gown: Students and Community
(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 4/11/2011)

Please choose one of the two options below:

Option 1 – Your role in the community

USC’s master plan (http://www.usc.edu/community/upcmasterplan/) lays out USC’s vision for developing the area surround the University Park Campus. Students are not mentioned in the majority of the plan save for the section on “community outreach:”

Throughout its 125-year history, USC has put high value on being a good neighbor—and on programs and projects that have a positive and visible impact on its neighborhoods. In his 1991 inaugural address, USC President Steven B. Sample spelled out his vision of the urban university, where traditional boundaries between university and community become blurred and permeable, and students have the opportunity to be active participants in the interchange.

As a result, USC has come together with local residents in one of the most ambitious social-outreach programs of any university in the nation. This culturally diverse, living laboratory of community collaboration reveals itself in more than 300 academic and professional programs that address educational, cultural, economic and safety issues in the local communities—and which earned USC the distinction of College of the Year 2000 from Time magazine and The Princeton Review.

http://www.usc.edu/community/upcmasterplan/
http://www.usc.edu/about/core_documents/role_and_mission_of_usc.htm

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), a non-profit agency in the Figueroa Corridor, presents a different opinion on the role of students in the community (full article: http://bit.ly/fUd7tJ):

“Students today aren't going to be here when any of the master plan is implemented, but these people in the community - they live here, and they’re raising their kids here, and they want to retire here.”

The UPC Master Plan is a general outline for redevelopment that would provide thousands of new beds in housing complexes, construct new academic buildings and lure high-end retailers and restaurants over the next two decades.

[SAJE staff] and others want to see a commitment to building affordable housing and funding real community improvement alongside plans for expansion and a promise that new retailers will serve both the school and the community.

Consider the contrasting perspectives above as you answer the following questions. Do you think your participation in a program like JEP serves USC’s greater goals? If so, be specific about
how these goals are served. If not, be specific about why not. **Next, do you think USC’s goals serve the community?** Again, make sure to explain why you think what you think. **Finally, based on your experiences in JEP, what roles and responsibilities do you think USC students should have as residents of the neighborhood and/or as students of the University?** Take a look back at the essays you have written (make sure to use Blackboard, so you can see your PA’s comments), and think about what you have learned over the past few weeks. Use any experiences you have had at your JEP site and in the community (with JEP or in any other capacity) that have changed your understanding of your role as a college student and as a resident of this neighborhood and city in your answer. (If you live outside of the university community, reflect generally on the roles and responsibilities you think that college students do have and should have to their city and neighborhoods in which a university resides.) **(If you have not had any experiences that have shifted your thinking about the role and responsibilities of University students in regards to any of these issues, explain why you think you have never had any such experience.)**

*If you've participated in JEP before:* you may also include your thoughts on how your current JEP assignment differs, complements or reinforces what you learned from your previous JEP experience(s).

**PA KEY:**

This is a challenging essay. We tried to give students a clear path for addressing a large issue: what is the role of USC students in the future development of the University? This is a contentious issue, as the two different visions of the future for the University Park area indicate. The current Master Plan has faced much resistance from community groups and from some students and student organizations on campus that are concerned about gentrification, about forcing current residents out, about policing non-students around USC and about a development plan that, as SAJE points, does not serve the permanent residents of the community, but only the transient residents. Understanding that college students in general are transient residents and that this can be a real challenge to building community is an important part of this essay. Think about the difference between homeowners or long-term renters and student renters in the same block—these groups have very different investments in the long-term viability of the community and are likely to treat the environment in which they live, work, play, and learn differently.

Grading wise, responses to the first bold question should fairly straightforward, I imagine most students will say something along the lines of “JEP serves USC’s goals.” The outstanding, adequate and less than adequate responses will be sorted out in how well students explain such a statement. **Every statement like the above must be explained, and adequate response needs to 1) explain USC’s goals, 2) argue how JEP serves those goals (or not), and 3) provide some evidence for how those goals are served by JEP.** Next, things get tricky—do USC’s goals (as expressed by mission statement and master plan), serve the community? **Here, the answers students provide are going to depend in a large part on who they consider to be “the community” and what they imagine to be the interests of “the community.”** The question does not directly ask students to
think about what “the community” means, but it will play a significant role in how this question is answered (i.e. are students part of the community? are developers? business owners? landlords? USC faculty? USC staff? is there a difference between homeowners and renters? how are schools part of the community?) It doesn't matter whether or not students think USC's goals serve the community, again, what matters is how well they explain how USC's goals serve and/or do not serve the community. I would imagine most responses will at least begin to recognize that USC's goals sometimes serve some people in the community and sometimes do not. The last bold question gets interesting—it asks a normative question (a question about how things should be), in order to push students to move their analysis to another scale. That is, last question requires that students to use what they personally learned from JEP to make some recommendations about how all students should act and behave (based in a set of roles and responsibilities) as temporary residents in a community. In order to answer this question, students need to 1) explain what roles in responsibilities they think students should have, 2) show how these roles and responsibilities are related to JEP, and 3) in some way, make clear how these roles and responsibilities are relevant to the future of the community (or communities) in University Park. As this is a new question, and a long one, please let me know if you have any issues, trouble grading, or get responses that are very different from what I have outlined above.

Option 2 - Benefits of Service-Learning for Students

In addition to potentially providing beneficial services for the communities in which it is implemented, service-learning is also credited with numerous benefits for the participating students. In particular:

- Young people gain access to the range of supports and opportunities (or developmental assets) they need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. One study of youth civic activism found that these settings had particular strength in cultivating youth and community involvement (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003).
- Increased sense of self-efficacy as young people learn that they can impact real social challenges, problems, and needs.
- Higher academic achievement and interest in furthering their education.
- Enhanced problem-solving skills, ability to work in teams, and planning abilities.
- Enhanced civic engagement attitudes, skills and behaviors. Many leaders in public service today speak about how they were nurtured, inspired, and shaped in early experiences in community service or volunteering.

(Chung, 1997; Coe-Regan et al, in press; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Tannenbaum, S. C., 2007; and YMCA of the USA, 2004)

Consider these benefits and reflect on the various ways in which your JEP experience has impacted you this semester. Based on your personal experience, do you believe that the above-mentioned benefits can come from participating in a service-learning program? Which outcomes seem most likely for service-learning students? Which seem least likely? Are there other benefits that you have experienced that are not listed above? In answering these questions, make sure to
explain your reasoning and use specific examples from your service-learning assignment and your course.

PA KEY:

Assessing the benefits of service-learning on university students is challenging and the abovementioned claims are hard to actually measure and document. This question requires the students to reflect on their experience with JEP and to ponder the personal benefits they may have gained from participating. Typically students thinking back on their JEP experience talk about how great an experience it was and how they enjoyed “helping others” and doing something useful for the community. This question asks them to go further and to consider the actual benefits (academic, personal, civic) of the experience. In other words, it is not about how they feel about it, but rather how they think it is (or will be) beneficial.

Students do not have to agree with the above statements and may share other benefits; but if they do, they should provide evidence or examples to back it up. They may also challenge the idea that service learning is beneficial for college students, but it is crucial that they support their claims through their observations and/or personal experience.

A good journal will be rooted in their JEP experience but it will be able to go beyond the immediate experience and to speculate on what might be the impact of service learning, not only on themselves but also on other participants in JEP.

ESSAY SEVEN – Final Reflections
(3 pages, 25 points, due: 4/20/2011)

Take a look back at the essays you have written (make sure to use Blackboard, so you can see your PA's comments), and think about what you have learned over the past few weeks. As noted in the assignment for Essay #6 (Option 2), one of the benefits of service-learning for participating students is “higher academic achievement.” For this final essay, we want you to focus on this particular outcome vis a vis your JEP assignment. First, consider the premise itself: how does participating in a service-learning program lead to higher academic achievement? When does it fail to do so? Do students’ outcomes vary by the subject matter of the course? Or do they vary by their experiences in the community? Describe what you think are the most important factors in a service-learning assignment that ensure “higher academic achievement” for university students.

Next, think about your JEP experiences in the context of your USC course: What is the most significant “academic” outcome of your JEP assignment? How has JEP affected your understanding of the course content? Why do you think your professor is giving academic credit for JEP? What are his or her goals for you? In answering these questions, make sure to use specific examples from your course. Think broadly about the relationship between JEP and your course. Even if you believe there is no direct connection, consider how you could apply a course concept to help better understand or explain something you encounter in your JEP experience. You might focus on detailing a specific learning outcome (e.g., describing a particular theory and how it came to life through your experiences, or how teaching helped you to understand a particular course concept). Alternatively, you might reflect on how your experiences in JEP shed light on material you have learned in other courses at USC.
The goal of this assignment is for you to think critically about the academic outcomes of service-learning and describe what you learned from your experience. If you are struggling to make the connection, as an alternative, explain, in detail, how you think the course or JEP could be redesigned to foster a more meaningful connection between your course and a service-learning experience in the community.

PA KEY:

The first part of the prompt follows up on Week 6 option 2 and asks students to focus specifically on the “higher academic achievement” benefit. Students should not just agree or disagree with this outcome, but they should explain how higher academic achievement may come from the participation in service learning. In other words, they should deconstruct the service learning process and explore what is theoretically needed to make this outcome possible. Students should draw from their experiences and observations but they should make sure to go beyond the purely personal and engage with the general benefits of service-learning.

The second part of the prompt focuses more directly on their specific academic outcome and asks them to reflect on JEP in the context of their USC course. What have they learned relating to their course? How did JEP complement (if that all) their course content? How has their experience altered their perceptions of what they have learned in class? But the question goes further since it asks students to actually think critically about why JEP is being offered as an option. In other words, what is the added value of JEP?

Answers will vary, depending on the individual experience of the student, and there are no right or wrong answers to this question. The main thing we are hoping for is that your students are self-reflective and thoughtful in their responses. The primary purpose of a final question like this is to encourage students to think back over the whole of their experiences in class and in the community and determine what are the primary lessons learned what are some of the most important things they learned from the professor/readings, and/or how their community experiences shed light on these issues.