

USING MOVIES AS A VEHICLE FOR CRITICAL THINKING IN ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper puts forth an application of movies into the economics curriculum. Seminar courses focusing on critical thinking skills serve as an ideal environment to integrate movie themes into the curriculum. Employing movies as an alternate to chalk and talk can stimulate student interest in economic issues and provide imagery that facilitates retention and long-term memory. The explicit example described in this study is derived from a critical thinking in economics course with a general theme of corporate governance, ethics, and society. Preliminary experiences of the authors have been very positive with respect to both student satisfaction and learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching economics via edutainment efforts is surfacing as a modern approach to supplement, or substitute, for traditional chalk and talk (Becker, 2003). The cost of using conventional chalk and talk to teach, rather than more contemporary outcome-based methods, may be significant in the long run as students choose to move away from economics and into more lively and interesting classes (Becker & Watts, 2001). Some economists have adopted teaching techniques that deviate from the pure lecture method by incorporating movies, television, and other forms of popular culture (Watts, 1998; Kish-Goodling, 1998; Formaini, 2001; Leet & Houser, 2003; Mateer, 2005; Sexton, 2006). Although it is possible that popular culture vehicles are more likely to fully engage students in the learning process, designing a framework that incorporates entertainment without compromising educational rigor can be a challenge.

The purpose of this manuscript is to provide a framework where movies can be applied to the learning environment in economics courses that focus on critical thinking. This paper is divided into four sections. First, a discussion of critical thinking, learning outcomes, and the role of assessment is presented. This is followed by extensive examples of potential discussion questions that can be used for movies with a general theme of corporate governance, ethics, and society. The third section presents a discussion of the critical thinking rubric used in the course. The fourth section offers concluding remarks.

CRITICAL THINKING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The focus of education has changed from an emphasis on the amount of material presented (i.e. how many chapters can a class finish in a semester?) to the comprehension of select learning outcomes (i.e. how do I show what my students learned?). The change in focus is due in part to the prominence of assessment in the educational process. Assessment has become the norm at most institutions. The assessment process typically focuses on identifying skills that students are expected to learn, usually referred to as learning outcomes, and then verifying that students have sufficiently gained these skills. The learning outcomes are not merely a recitation of facts but instead concepts and techniques that students must be able to understand and demonstrate.

Many disciplines such as accounting, finance, and management information systems have projects or simulations that can be used to exhibit student comprehension. Other disciplines such as marketing, international business and political science have case studies through which students can display their skills. However, economics, due to its breadth of topics, does not lend itself to just one capstone event. Furthermore, many economics programs include a variety of courses that lack a defined core objective which makes a single project insufficient to demonstrate student knowledge. In comparison, accounting programs typically prepare students for the C.P.A. exam while technology students learn specific programming skills.

One key attribute of all economics classes is the emphasis on critical thinking skills. Problems and situations are presented and through a clear and defensible thought process, potential outcomes are discussed. The development of critical thinking skills is one of the main roles that economics plays in either a liberal arts or a business curriculum. The importance of critical thinking skills is

where economics differentiates itself from the other disciplines. While all disciplines use critical thinking, the process of analyzing many real world situations is based on fundamental economic theories.

The focus on assessment has also come at a time where universities are competing more for students and working harder to retain those students. Kuh (2004), writing about the conceptual framework for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), finds that what students do in college is more important to their success at learning than who they are or where they go to school. Conclusions drawn from the NSSE survey include that students are more satisfied if they are engaged in the learning environment and are able to clearly see gains in intellectual skills. Two main skills identified are critical thinking or problem-solving skills and social and ethical development.

The focus on social and ethical development is also a fundamental part of the accreditation process by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). While the organization does not delineate how a school is to teach ethics, all accredited colleges must be able to demonstrate how ethical issues are presented in their curriculums.

The challenge facing economics programs is multifaceted. Not only must fundamental economic principles be taught but it must be put forth in a way that engages students and gives them the problem-solving skills to be successful in other disciplines. In addition, the process must include a method for assessing the success of students at mastering the learning outcomes. This must be accomplished without losing the broad-based exposure to ideas on which economics curriculums thrive.

Active learning has been shown to increase student involvement and retention of information (Kolb, 1981; Erickson, 1984). The interaction from case studies or team projects provides a stimulating atmosphere within the classroom (Carlson and Schodt, 1995; Bartlett, 1996; Palmmini, 1996). Experimental courses provide a natural method for assessing programs (Walstad, 2001). A key point of active learning is to engage the students so that they are unaware they are learning at the same time they are applying the ideas. Many of the economics concepts especially those that involve ethical behavior are tricky to present without becoming preachy. Plus, many students do not have the experiences that enable them to relate to various ethical situations.

Movies provide the needed link between theory and reality. Movies present the topic visually and with the necessary background to allow all the viewers to see and understand the issues. The movies are basically visual case studies with imagery and coding that can augment retention and comprehension (Myers, 2004).

The students don't have to experience the situation in their own lives to identify with the issues. Instead, they are able to see the complexity of the situation from a detached viewpoint. Consequently, students do not immediately take one side or another because of personal experience. This allows the situation to be examined and analyzed without interference from preconceived opinions or biases. Any biases or opinions that do exist are brought out during an open seminar discussion and can be examined.

For success in using movies as a vehicle to teach and demonstrate critical thinking skills, the instructor must have a delineated outline of topics to be covered in order to guide the discussion and keep it on topic. In addition, each movie must present a different aspect in order to avoid repetition of topics. Appendix A provides a list of thirty-five movies on the topic of corporate governance, ethics and society. Exhibit 1 outlines ten movies from the list, each focusing on a different aspect of the overall theme.

The overall topic of ethics is viewed through three lenses: society, intra-corporation and external corporation behavior. Students are challenged with the complexities of decision-making. In *Gattaca*, complete genetic information seems only useful at first until it is used not to help society reach its potential but to control society and remove the right for self-determination. *An Inconvenient Truth* and *City of God* examine the role of how individually it can be hard to change overall society but everyone working together can make that change or decide if a change is even warranted. *Casablanca* asks the quintessential societal question of what is the value of a life. The four movies dramatize basic ethical questions. With just lecture, biases and opinions surface and it can be hard for students to see things from the other side. The movies present the extra dimension that lectures can not provide.

Ethical behavior among colleagues is the sub-theme of three of the movies selected. *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* examines the mistrust that can occur between co-workers especially if individual goals are not in agreement with group goals. It also presents how misunderstandings can lead to a breakdown in group dynamics. *Office Space* and *In Good Company* present aspects of the employer-employee relationship. In *Office Space*, the employee viewpoint is presented while *In Good Company* views the workplace from the employer perspective with the added dimension of age discrimination.

The third focus completes the circle of discussion. The first group examined society's responsibility to its members, the second group examined the responsibility between members of society and the third group presents the responsibility of corporations to society. *Glengarry Glen Ross* presents the classic

salesman dilemma between getting the sale and being honest with customers and losing the sale. *Who Killed the Electric Car?* examines the various firms and organizations involved with the decision to stop production of the electric car. Students are asked to evaluate and assign the degree of responsibility to the groups involved recognizing that no one entity is entirely responsible but the actions of one group affect the actions of the other groups. The cycle of unethical behavior begetting more unethical behavior is presented in *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*. Students see how greed can lead to short-run gains for a few players but long-run destruction of value for all shareholders of a firm not just the stockholders or the unethical players.

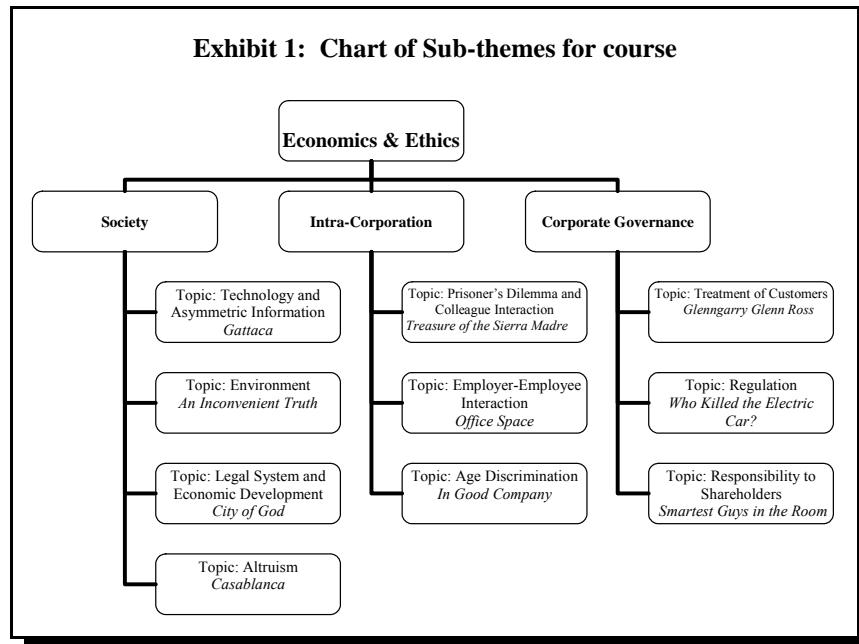
SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This section provides sample discussion questions for ten movies that could be employed as part of a seminar course focusing on corporate governance, ethics, and society. The questions could easily be modified for different movies with an ethics theme or completely different themes such as labor relations, macroeconomics, civil rights and discrimination, business icons, or cross-cultural relations. Movies are merely the vehicle for engaging the students and providing the needed setting to understand the issues surrounding a topic.

The specific movies with a corporate governance, ethics, and society theme that are included in this section are *Gattaca*, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Office Space*, *In Good Company*, *Who Killed the Electric Car?*, *City of God*, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, and *Casablanca*. Any of the movies in Appendix A could have been used. The specific movies selected by the authors was based on diversity as the sample provides representation from new, classic, foreign, documentary, drama, and comedic films. The diversity of the movies across time and genre allows students to see how similar ideas on corporate governance, ethics and society change over time and are approached in different methods such as comedies and documentaries. The core issues are basic to society and reappear with each generation but with a slightly different twist.

In addition to showing and discussing movies, the course requires foundation lectures on the topics of ethics, corporate governance and regulation. The approach of the authors is an approximate one-third mix of foundation lectures, movies, and discussion with writing assignments.

Exhibit 1 presents a framework of the roles the ten movies play in examining economics and ethics. Any discussion of ethics requires objectively examining the core values of an institution. For economics, the institution can be macro or micro-oriented. Society as a whole is a macroeconomic institution. Four movies present various aspects of ethics from a societal point of view. *Gattaca*, *An Inconvenient Truth* and *City of God* each look at a part of society from technology, the environment and the legal system and ask what is the level of responsibility that governments and society have to its members. *Casablanca* concludes the sub-theme by asking if what constitutes ethical behavior should change during times of distress.



On a microeconomic level, the firm and its relationships with stakeholders outside of the firm along with stakeholders within the firm are examined. Six movies examine assorted issues associated with corporations. Group interaction usually creates ethical situations whether it is between colleagues (*Treasure of the Sierra Madre*) or between employers and employees (*Office Space* and *In Good Company*). The final three movies extend ethical dilemmas to those faced by corporations interacting with the public and other corporations. Society can be the overall public and other corporations (*Who Killed the Electric Car?*), customers

(*Glengarry Glen Ross*), or the various stakeholders in a corporation (*Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*).

Gattaca is the first movie shown because many students will not have seen the movie and it relates to something tangible to students – getting the opportunity to prove oneself on the job. *Gattaca* is a science fiction movie that presents how technological advances along with asymmetric information can lead to discrimination. Students examine the trade-off between equity and efficiency.

Questions for *Gattaca* (1997)

1. If significant genetic modification was possible do you think employment discrimination would be a resulting externality?
2. Would you pursue genetic perfection for your child if the technology is available in the not too distant future? Why or why not?
3. If you are single at some point in the future, would you run a quick genetic test on someone you are dating in order to close the asymmetric information gap?
4. Do you believe it will be a good thing or a bad thing if we live in a world with genetic information transparency (i.e., you have more information about your health and genetics but so do prospective employers, insurance companies, etc...)?
5. What do you think is more important---nature or nurture? What about nature on steroids versus nurture?

After engaging the students on the idea of how complete genetic information can be used to help and hinder, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* presents the situation of a lack of information and how this leads to the prisoner's dilemma especially in partnerships.

Questions for *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948)

1. *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is considered the first and definitive movie on greed. The entire movie is about the prisoner's dilemma – if they all work together, they can be successful or they can turn against each other. What is the appeal of gold? Is there ever enough?
2. What are the inherent problems in a partnership? How does the arrival of Cody change the dynamics? For example, consider the following quotes

from the movie. Howard says, "I know what gold does to men's souls. As long as there's no find, the noble brotherhood will last, but when the piles of gold begin to grow, that's when the trouble starts." "Gold don't carry a curse. It all depends upon whether or not the guy who finds it is the right guy."

3. Is it easier to be ethical if the parties are extremely poor? Would it be different if the parties were extremely rich and always had been rich?
4. How do the plans each man has for the wealth the gold will bring provide insight into their characters and actions?
5. The movie is known for its film noir cinematography and symbolism. What are some of the symbols and metaphors for the ethical dilemmas in the movie?

Glengarry Glen Ross introduces the third category of ethical behavior by examining sales practices and customer treatment in the name of profits.

Questions for *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992)

1. The film shows parts of two days in the lives of four desperate real estate agents (Al Pacino, Jack Lemmon, Ed Harris and Alan Arkin) who are prepared to engage in any number of unethical and/or illegal acts (from lies and flattery to bribery, threats and intimidation to burglary) in order to sell undesirable real estate to unwilling prospective buyers ("leads") while the put upon office manager (Spacey) awaits for them to make their sale after the hardnosed corporate boss (Baldwin) gives marching orders to do their jobs (source is wikipedia). To what extent do you think the general nature of being a salesperson leads to a propensity toward unethical behavior?
2. What is an effective reward/incentive system for a salesperson?
3. The movie yields the famous acronym of ABC (Always Be Closing) in the scene written by David Mamet entitled "Coffee is for closers." This concept is contrasted by Dave (Ed Harris) explaining that in the past the goal of a salesman was to create a relationship with a customer over a lifetime (sell six cars over thirty years to the same customer instead of pursuing the close of one questionable sell that turns off the customer). Do you feel the future of sales will be driven by the mentality to always be closing or focusing on long-term relationships? Explain.

4. David Mamet altered the original ending of the play when writing the movie. In the play, Roma (Al Pacino) flatters Shelley (Jack Lemon) and suggests that the two work together. Then, when Shelley leaves the room, Roma turns on Shelley and reveals that his flattery was only a con to get a share of Shelley's sales. In the movie, this last-second turn is omitted, and Roma's flattery is assumed to be sincere. How would the tone of the movie change if the play adaptation of the event would have been portrayed? Why do you think Mamet made the alteration?
5. Acknowledging that there is good money to be made in sales, do you believe you could have a career in sales or do you follow the Lloyd Dobler (John Cusack in *Say Anything*) line of "I don't want to sell anything, buy anything, or process anything as a career. I don't want to sell anything bought or processed, or buy anything sold or processed, or process anything sold, bought, or processed, or repair anything sold, bought, or processed. You know, as a career, I don't want to do that."

After moving from the macro to the micro, *An Inconvenient Truth* returns to the societal aspect of ethics with the questions of whom do you believe based on scientific fact or political affiliation. Furthermore, the documentary asks the viewer to identify the role of society in regards to the environment, especially an environment many years in the future from the perspective of inter-generational equity.

Questions for *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006)

1. Al Gore's basic claim is that global warming is real and largely caused by human externalities of carbon dioxide. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), how convinced are you of Gore's proposition after watching the documentary?
2. The Associated Press contacted 19 experts in climate research and all agreed that Gore presents the basic science of climate change correctly. On the other hand, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial by climatologist Richard Lindzen criticized the documentary by stating the claims put forth by Gore are not supported by the currently available data. Who do you trust: The AP, *Wall Street Journal*, neither, or both? Why?
3. Let's assume that you conclude that we should start taking actions to prevent global warming as a move toward being safe instead of sorry. What

specific actions would you suggest and what are the economic implications of the proposed actions?

4. In the end, vote for one of the following as the most likely event: (1) Global warming is real and caused in great part by human beings yielding the need for humans to divert away from much of our use of carbon gases; (2) Global warming is real but a natural part of the life-cycle of the planet. We probably will have another warming phase but our ultimate concern will be dense water vapor that eventually puts us into an ice age; (3) There never has been and there never will be concrete evidence of global warming because it is simply a hypothesis put forth by the scientific community in order to receive grant funding and keep their jobs. In fact, climatologist cannot correctly forecast the weather for next month let alone forecast the pending end of the world. Select one of the three and explain the reason for your selection.

After several heavy movies, the middle of the class has two comedies, *Office Space* and *In Good Company*. *Office Space* looks at bureaucracy in the workplace and how managers treat and motivate employees. *In Good Company* examines age discrimination in the workplace and, of particular interest to students, what a young manager must consider when supervising employees who are older and more experienced. *In Good Company* includes an additional tangent discussion on the ethical treatment of new employees after a merger.

Questions for *Office Space* (1999)

1. Shortly after being asked about the use of a new cover sheet on the TPS report by four different people, Peter (Ron Livingston) explains to the external consultants (the Bob's) that it is hard working for the firm because he has eight different bosses and his only real motivation is to not be hassled. How big of a problem is motivation in the current corporate culture of the United States?
2. Consider the following phrases from the movie *Office Space*: (1) What if we are still doing this when we are fifty; or (2) It would be nice to know we have the job security to still be here at fifty. Which attitude do you think is healthier?

3. One concept put forth by the Bob's is that it is better to fire people on a Friday in order to give them the weekend to cool down. To what extent do you agree?
4. In his hypnotic state Peter is somewhat indifferent about his meeting with the Bob's while everyone else is threatened by their interview out of a fear job loss. The Bob's view Peter's indifference as confidence and become somewhat enamored with his body language and the vibe that surrounds him. The Bob's go as far as to recommend him for an upper management position despite the fact the Peter is rarely showing up for work at the time of the recommendation. To what extent do you think image is more important than content in the workplace with respect to promotion and career advancement?
5. If you worked for a firm that arbitrarily fired you and at the same time promoted a less productive coworker, would you consider minor corporate theft as a reprisal (e.g., the situation put forth to Michael and Samir)? What percent of people do you think would participate in corporate theft under this premise? Explain.

Questions for *In Good Company* (2004)

1. Who do you think is more uncomfortable with the age difference, Dan (Dennis Quaid) or Carter (Topher Grace)? Explain.
2. Do you think it is important to try to blend corporate cultures after a corporate takeover/merger or is it natural for the acquiring company to dominate the target company? Explain.
3. Early in the movie Carter's wife Kimberly (Selma Blair) leaves him and files for divorce. Can a person make a big career push in their youth without it taking a toll on their personal life? Explain why or why not.
4. Mark (Clark Gregg) tells Dan and Carter toward the end of the movie upon hearing that he has been fired "The whole thing seems so arbitrary---I feel used." Dan responds by saying "Yes, it is kind of tough to know you are replaceable." The reality is that almost all of us are easily replaceable at our jobs (Tiger Woods might be a rare exception). This theory of humans being interchangeable in the labor market is one of the tenets of capitalism that concerned Karl Marx. Do you think most people realize they are easily replaceable in the labor market or do you think that most people feel a certain level of ownership of their job? Explain.

5. After being rehired toward the end of the movie *Morty* (David Paymer) states "Timing is everything in life." To what extent do you think this statement is true with respect to the job market and career development?

Who Killed the Electric Car? returns to corporate governance with an examination of regulation and the trade-offs corporations face between societal concerns, regulation and profitability.

Questions for *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (2006)

1. What is the greatest strength versus weakness of the movie?
2. Put in rank order the seven suspects of who killed the electric car by limiting the development and adoption of the EV technology: automobile manufacturers, the oil industry, the U.S. government, battery limitations, the California Air Resource Board, hydrogen vehicles, and consumers.
3. Karl Brauer, editor-in-chief of Edmunds.com, a popular auto market web site, wrote his own criticism of the movie, contrasting the interpretations in the movie with his own in a rumor/fact format. Mr. Brauer's conjecture that "the average L.A. resident's daily driving need is...higher than that national average" is supported by a federal report that in 2001 the average Los Angeles commute was 16.2 miles (32.4 miles daily round trip), which was the highest of all American cities, though that distance is still much less than the typical electric vehicle range. Given this information versus the documentary, are you more likely to believe Brauer or director Chris Paine? Explain.

A central idea is: does the government have an ethical obligation to provide and protect property rights of all its citizens along with providing a just legal system? *City of God* examines these issues in the setting of the slums of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The movie details the difficulties of economic development especially with weak government institutions.

Questions for *City of God* (2002)

1. The tagline for *City of God* is "Fight and you will never survive...Run and you will never escape." In your opinion, is there any way out of the cycle of poverty? Explain.

2. Only one professional actor served in the movie the City of God. The director provided a couple of months of direct acting training but did very little rehearsing despite the inexperienced cast because he wanted to maintain a street feel with the work. What letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F) would you assign the director and why?
3. The movie *City of God* is based on real people and real events. How is it possible that youth gangs could take over major portions of a major city of the world like Rio de Janeiro for over twenty years (1960's until the late 1980's)?
4. Is the violence created in a slum area (in this case the slum is Rio Favela) the externality associated with being trapped in a situation with little or no economic opportunity (e.g., happens out of desperation) or is it simply created because a handful of people take advantage of a neighborhood that is not a priority for police and society to protect (i.e., with no explicit legal authority or protection of property rights in the slum areas the gangs move in to fill the power void)? Explain.
5. Assume you could go back to your childhood and were placed in Rio of the seventies. Do you think you are more likely to follow a path of Rocket or the path of Lil Ze? Explain your response.

No economics and ethics course would be complete without an examination of Enron. The *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* documentary presents the corporate culture of Enron and how it contributed to one of the biggest corporate governance scandals in recent U.S. history. Ethics versus economics is presented as employees work under intense pressure for profits and a willingness to lie to maintain the stock price.

Questions for *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (2005)

1. The tagline for the movie is "It's just business." Is this an adequate justification for business actions? Why or why not?
2. The vitality curve (also known as rank and yank) is a management philosophy in which the employees are ranked and the lowest performers are routinely fired. GE and Enron are two famous firms that have used this process. Discuss this management philosophy. What kind of corporate culture does this practice create? What is the long-run effect of this practice?

3. Milgram's experiment was a study on social psychology that measured the willingness to obey an authority to do something in conflict with one's conscience. Enron employees provided this reasoning for their behavior. Discuss.
4. To whom is the firm responsible – stockholders, bondholders, employees, customers, the firm itself? What role does Wall Street play in Enron's story?
5. Would you quit a job when you have reason to believe some people in the firm are unethical but you are making a high salary with great stock options? There is no smoking gun, just a question on how we are making these enormous profits. How does your response relate to the plight (made a lot of money and then lost a lot of money) of average Enron employee?
6. Based on anecdotal evidence, former Enron employees now at other firms tend to hire each other. Is this a lack of ethics or the result of understanding from a shared experience?

The final movie ends the class back where it began with a movie that examines ethics in a societal sense. While many people have seen *Casablanca*, few viewers will have viewed it under the umbrella idea of ethics. The movie, through many examples and characters, asks the simple question of what is the value of another person's life. As Humphrey Bogart contemplates his goals versus the greater good, the movie presents the many small ethical decisions that people face daily especially during times of war and distress. The class started with a discussion of core values from an individual point of view and ends with the defining core value of a person and of a society.

Questions for *Casablanca* (1942)

1. Consider the following statement by Ugarte (Peter Lorre): "You know, Rick, I have many a friend in Casablanca, but somehow, just because you despise me, you are the only one I trust." What does the statement imply with respect to the type of city Casablanca is?
2. Consider the following statement by Senor Ferrari: "As the leader of all illegal activities in Casablanca, I am an influential and respected man." To what extent are leaders of illegal activities influential and respected people, both in the past and the present?

3. It could be argued that captain Renault (Claude Rains), the Chief of Police, is the most immoral character in the movie. He sells letters of transit at a scalpers price, provides deals to young women for letters of transit for in kind favors (including the Bulgarian newlywed), does not pay for his liquor, is shocked to find gambling taking place at Rick's despite being awarded his daily winnings before shutting down the casino, solves a crime by rounding up the usual suspects (or possibly rounding double the number of usual suspects given an extreme crime), and is cozy with the Nazi regime as needed. Which is Renault better suited for in the modern world: (1) Corporate executive; (2) Politician; (3) Lawyer; (4) Anchorman; or (5) Police Chief? Explain.
4. Given that *Casablanca* is the original great chick's movie, does Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) truly love Rick or is she playing with him throughout in order to gain the letter of transit for Victor (Paul Henreid)? Does it make a difference given the movie was made in 1942 versus the reality television world of today? Some critics have expressed the view that Ilsa as one of the more unlikable characters in a movie full of potentially unlikable characters? Do you feel she is an unlikable character? Explain.
5. Consider two of Rick's (Humphrey Bogart) famous comments: "I stick my neck out for nobody" and "I'm the only cause I'm interested in." Why would Adam Smith find a kindred spirit in Rick? Despite the previous statements the culmination of the movie finds Rick telling Ilsa "I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world." Is Rick self-centered, a noble citizen of the world, or simply someone struggling to find his moral compass? Explain.

COURSE ORGANIZATION AND ASSESSMENT

One of the bigger challenges of teaching a non-traditional course is how to evaluate students. A movies thematic course relies heavily on seminar discussion, written communication in the form of writing assignments and essay examinations.

In order to watch the movies in their entirety at one sitting, the class was organized as two consecutive class periods. Students were given the discussion questions in advance and a student leader was chosen for each movie. The discussion following each movie was initiated by the faculty member and the

student leader. This provided the needed flow to begin drawing out the main issues. The other students were sequentially included in the discussion.

Not all students were initially comfortable with a discussion-based class but by providing open-ended questions and allowing students to develop their arguments through the discussion eventually all the students are easily engaged and comfortable. As with all discussion-based learning, it is important to allow all ideas to be presented and not allow any one individual to dominate the discourse.

After each movie, students were required to write an essay on the movie and corresponding lecture material. Students were encouraged to wait a few days before writing in order to allow the ideas to percolate and develop the richness needed for analysis. The essays also included a section on current examples of the dilemmas in the news. By including the current events, students were able to see how pervasive the ethical dilemmas are and how there isn't actually a definitive solution to many of the dilemmas. They begin to understand how certain characteristics in a corporation or in society create the environment for ethical dilemmas. Finally, students learn the art of taking a stand on an issue and presenting a clear verbal or written argument.

Exhibit 2 provides the grading rubric used for this class, which was adapted from the critical thinking teaching model of Washington State University (2008). For each learning objective, students are assessed as accomplished, competent, sufficient or insufficient, with related grades ranging from an A for accomplished to a D/F for insufficient.

Exhibit 2: Grading rubric for course				
Learning Objectives	Level 1 Insufficient	Level 2 Sufficient	Level 3 Competent	Level 4 Accomplished
Identifies the issue or question	Demonstrates severe misconceptions about the important themes or issues.	Displays an incomplete understanding of the important issues in a question or problem.	Displays a rather complete understanding of the important issues or themes in a question or problem.	Displays a thorough and accurate understanding of the important issues or themes in a question or problem.
Identifies and considers the influence of context and assumptions	Does not relate to other contexts.	Analysis includes some outside verification but primarily relies on established authorities.	Analysis acknowledges complexity although may hold to bias in context.	Analyzes the issue with a clear sense of scope and context, including assessment of audience.

Exhibit 2: Grading rubric for course				
Learning Objectives	Level 1 Insufficient	Level 2 Sufficient	Level 3 Competent	Level 4 Accomplished
Develops, presents and communicates personal viewpoint	Fails to present or justify own opinion or forward hypothesis.	Position or hypothesis is clearly inherited or adopted with little original consideration.	Position includes some original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes or extends other assertions, although some aspects may have been adopted.	Position demonstrates ownership for constructing knowledge, integrating objective analysis and intuition while integrating contrary views.
Presents, assesses, and analyzes supporting evidence	Excludes data and information.	Overlooks some information and does not distinguish among fact, opinion and value judgments.	Demonstrates skill in searching, selecting and evaluating information but confuses causality and correlation.	Synthesizes and assimilates data, questions data's accuracy, relevance and completeness and recognizes bias.
Integrates other disciplinary perspectives and viewpoints	Deals with a single perspective and fails to discuss other' perspectives.	Begins to relate alternative view to qualify analysis.	Engages challenging ideas tentatively or may dismiss alternative views hastily.	Integrates own and others' ideas in a complex process of judgment and justification in a respectful manner.
Identifies and assesses conclusions and implications	Fails to present any solution or recommendations.	Acknowledges some aspects of context to the problem and solution but presents conclusions as relative and not considering consequences.	Considers the influence of context on the choice of solutions. Presents implications that may impact other people or issues.	Demonstrates a clear sense of context in proposed solutions. Implications are developed and ambiguities are considered.
Communicates effectively	In many places, language obscures meaning. No citing of sources.	Language does not interfere with communication. Sources are cited.	Errors are not frequent or distracting although there may be some problems with style and voice. Sources are cited and used correctly.	Organization and style are clear and transitions between ideas enhance presentation. Employment of sources understands the issues involved with using information.

The seven learning objectives encompass the full range of discussion and growth in critical thinking. Initially, students are asked to identify the issues but also understand and analyze the context and assumptions surrounding the core issues. As students develop and present their viewpoints, they must include supporting information while addressing contrary views. Part of the development of a viewpoint is to assess the issue from a variety of perspectives and recognize the implications of the conclusions on the various sides. Finally, the quality of the communication is considered. While not a traditional construct of critical thinking, the ability to effectively communicate one's viewpoint affects its perception and impact. Instead of just summarizing, the overall goal of critical thinking is to provide conclusions that take into account the information available and the context in which the information is gathered, other viewpoints and the implication of the conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Modern students are often not adept at learning via the traditional chalk and talk presentation style of many economics professors. Students are increasingly more visual learners that desire education in a more fun and engaging format. Furthermore, as universities and programs compete for the top students, they must provide the learning experience that students expect. Accrediting bodies are increasingly focusing on assessment of learning outcomes and encouraging educators to assure retention of core concepts. In addition, ethics is being required to be incorporated across curriculums, further adding complexity to the way economics is taught.

Economics has a defined role in this new environment. As a main source of definitive classes that develop critical thinking skills, economics can bridge the gap between presenting theory and stimulating problem-solving skills. No where are the ambiguities of problem-solving more apparent than in ethical dilemmas. Movies present an intriguing vehicle for engaging students and presenting the ethical dilemmas with the necessary depth that the students need without being preachy. By recognizing the variety of ethical dilemmas that exist in both the macroeconomic and microeconomic environment, students are able to analyze the situations by applying economic theory and not just opinion. Furthermore, the class discussions and written assignments on the movies provide the needed documentation for assessment purposes.

The initial experiences of the authors with this class have been surprisingly positive. Student satisfaction with the course was extremely high and the faculty members included felt that the students rose to the challenge and looked beyond the simple opinions and viewpoints to an in-depth analysis of the issues. The students prided themselves on playing devil's advocate to bring out the inherent trade-offs society, corporations and individuals face with ethical dilemmas. Equity versus efficiency, how do you decide who to fire, what is the responsibility of a government to its population and the value of a human life were just some of the spirited debates in the class. The students clearly demonstrated not just mastery of economic theory but of the economic thought process and especially, its role in evaluating ethical situations.

The potential for direct assessment of movies as a method is possible via national exams like California Critical Thinking Skills Test and the Education Testing Service (ETS) Major Field Achievement Test in Business. Eight students completing the course also completed the ETS exam at the end of the semester and scored ten percentile points higher on average than other business students, although the sample size of the control group is not large enough to explore an empirical evaluation. Future research should augment this initial theoretical foundation with an empirical investigation.

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APPENDIX A**Sample List of Movies for the Theme of Corporate Governance, Ethics, and Society**

The Apartment (1960)	Boiler Room (2000)
Casablanca (1942)	A Civil Action (1998)
The Corporation (2003)	Crash (2004)
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988)	Dogville (2003)
Do the Right Thing (1989)	Double Indemnity (1944)
The Emperor's Club (2002)	Erin Brockovich (2000)
Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room (2005)	Fun with Dick and Jane (2005)
Gattaca (1997)	Glenn Garry Glenn Ross (1992)
Grapes of Wrath (1940)	In Good Company (2004)
An Inconvenient Truth (2006)	The Insider (1999)
Lord of the War (2005)	Matchstick Men (2003)
Mississippi Burning (1988)	Mr. Deeds (2002)
Office Space (1999)	The Rainmaker (1997)
Schindler's List (1993)	Syriana (2005)
Tin Men (1987)	Trading Places (1983)
Traffic (2000)	Treasure of the Sierra Madre (1948)
Tucker: The Man and His Dream (1988)	Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices (2005)
Wall Street (1987)	Who Killed the Electric Car? (2006)

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