

Rethinking Economics

How-to Guide:

...Devise your own module

This guide will show you how to:

- Get like-minded people together.
- Plan and write the module.
- Get your university to run the module.
- Inspiration from others who have done this already.

Introduction

Tired of the learning the same sort of economics? Sick of ahistorical perspectives, multiple choice tests, and only learning neoclassical models? All too often economics students come up against this same lack of diversity in their curriculum.

Whilst your long term aim might be to change the core of the economics degree at your university, it can be frustrating to wait for slow, radical change such as this. So, while you're waiting, why not show your university how it's done... and devise your very own module?

This has been done before, is easier than it might sound, and also provides a truly powerful demonstration of the type of change we are advocating.

Step one: getting ideas for course content

Figuring out the content of the module can be a fun activity and can be a chance to get lots of economics students interested in your society too! When they see how proactive you and that they could be learning some really interesting and otherwise untaught economics, chances are they'll be pretty impressed.

1. A simple survey (i.e via SurveyMonkey* and/ or printed copies that you hand out in lectures) could do the trick!
2. The survey could include an invite to a meeting for those who are keen to flesh this out further.
3. Examples of good alternative module syllabuses offered in UK already are helpful to look at. Leeds Uni offers some interesting modules you wouldn't find within most economics degrees (<http://business.leeds.ac.uk/undergraduate/bsc-economics/> for detailed syllabuses).

*Rethinking Economics has a paid subscription to SurveyMonkey. Please email membership@rethinkeconomics.org for more information on how to use this service.

Step two: holding a planning meeting

If you want to make a module that shows academics at your university how it can be done, chances are other members of your group will be thinking the same thing! The first

step is to identify who is interested, arrange your first meeting, and start brainstorming what the module will be about.

A good way to get people from within your group keen could be to raise it at one of your committee meetings and then arrange a separate meetup just about planning the module. To do this you just need to:

1. **Arrange a time and place;** maybe in your Students' Union or local pub. People from outside your committee might be interested so you could choose to advertise it widely too.
2. **Advertise;** a Facebook event for the meet up might be a good way to do this.

Step three: Content creation

This might be done in one first meeting or in a series of regular meeting which take place at the same time and in the same place each week. In the meeting(s) you might want to;

- Find and bring along a copy of your Uni's formal module syllabus; this gives you a format to work with and helps guide planning.
- Think about schools of thought or topics that you want the course to cover
- Think about 'learning objectives' for course participants
- Think about learning activities for the course. Will there be group work? Essays? A mini project? Will there be tutorials as well as lectures?
- Think about format for the module. Who is going to teach it? How is it going to be assessed? Remember though that because *you* are devising the module this gives you creative control and freedom to vary from the usual format!
- Once you've decided on the topic for the module a quick google for similar courses taught elsewhere (so that you can borrow their reading lists, their course outline, etc.) is pretty handy.

Step four: Finding an academic to help

How difficult this is will vary a lot from university to university; if you know of lecturers at your university that are sympathetic to your cause, perfect. If not, there may be lecturers from nearby universities who would be up for helping you. Our [speakers database](#) provides a useful starting point, but if you're still stumped email ukcampaigns@rethinkeconomics.org and we'll be happy to help.

Some inspiration...

Alternative modules have been put on by local groups across the country already... it's not as hard as it might seem. For example, in Autumn 2013, The Manchester Post-Crash Economics Society ran an optional evening module that ran for ten weeks. This course was taught by Dr Sakhir Devrim Yilmaz, and was well attended especially considering it was an optional evening module.

Bubbles, Panics and Crashes; The Manchester Module

Below is a snippet of what the course was about (for full details the course module can be found...), but of course your course could take any slant out of the numerous neglected schools of thought within economics. What about doing an ecological economics module or a feminist economics module? Thinking about what to teach is the fun part, so get your

Course Overview:

This course explores the reasons behind the several large bubbles and crashes since the Great Depression, policy responses from governments and central banks, and the relevance and possible outcomes of these policies. Special attention will be paid to the works of Hyman Minsky-Post-Keynesian school and Austrian school, and Circuitist schools as well as orthodox explanations and policy suggestions. A comparison of the current crisis with the Great Depression will also accompany the analysis.

Aims

- To introduce students to the recurrent nature of financial crises
- To introduce students to the nature and causes of speculative booms
- To introduce students to the works of Hyman Minsky and Post-Keynesian endogenous money literature, as well as Circuitist explanations of crisis
- To present the Austrian Business Cycle Theory
- To introduce students to the securitization and its role in the credit crunch
- To introduce students to policy and regulation oriented responses to the credit crunch, and possible alternatives
- To introduce students to the possible future outcomes as a result of these policy responses.

Pragmatics of running the course

In the example above, the university refused to put the module on as part of the economics degree, but PCE Manchester persevered nonetheless! If this happens to you, don't be disheartened; your university will probably let you use their facilities and you could run it as an optional, evening module.