Final Project – Sports Economics

Description & Expectations

The final project is to be completed in groups of 2-3 people. Each group will choose a specific team, professional organization, or sport along with a general area of focus (the major topic). Each group member is to select a unique research question that relates to their group's major topic. Research questions could be motivated by a recent event – such as one that explains a proposed (or recent) policy change, a new initiative, a change in the rules or structure that would have a broader impact (not simply affect the outcome of a match), or differences in the experiences, treatment, and/or representation of athletes of different genders, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, etc. Alternatively, questions could be motivated by personal interests so long as you can identify an economic variable for analysis. You will not be allowed to choose topics/events that are discussed in detail during lectures or were part of a short essay assignment. A list of sample topics can be found below.

Each group member will produce a 5-6 page analysis section of the final project. You are to use the economic models and concepts learned in this class to analyze and explore their research question. You are not required to include figures or tables, but most will find it beneficial as graphical evidence is common in economic analysis. All figures and tables will come at the conclusion of the paper. The works cited page and pages with figures do not count towards the page length. Each group member must cite at least five references in their analysis, at least three of which must be from academic/scholarly primary source articles.

Components of each group member's paper:

- Introduction & Motivation (Short) – Restate the research questions and provide a motivation. *Why should the reader care? What makes this question interesting?*
- Assumptions & Conditions of the Environment/Situation – Provide relevant background information that must be known to the reader so that he/she can understand the analysis.
- Analysis – Using the economic theories discussed during lectures, in the textbook, or in the primary source articles to answer the research question. Evaluate the arguments of those theories and synthesize the scholarly findings from the scholarly sources.
- Conclusions – Summarize major findings/conclusions. Identify the primary take-away of the analysis.

Group members will collaborate to write an introduction, conclusion, and abstract. The introduction should include relevant background information about the broad topic (i.e. the specific team, professional organization, or sport) and preview the analysis.

The conclusion should include a discussion of the aggregate impact of the individual research questions on the broader topic. The final project should be approximately 12-14 pages in length for pairs and 17-20 pages in length for groups of three.

A Starting Point for Final Project Topics

- "eSports" as a new franchise / virtual gaming tournaments
- League expansion (e.g. PAC 10 conference to the PAC 12 conference)
- The Superbowl: pay-per-view v.s. major network coverage
- The NAIA vs NCAA
- The money/economics of little league or high school sports
- Take a deeper look into the USFL
- Sports betting/gambling
- Collegiate athletics and academic performance or major selection
- Alcohol sales at arenas/stadiums - professional level and/or collegiate level
- Compare/contrast men's leagues and women's leagues
- Race wage gaps in professional sports - do they exist?
- Discrimination in sports (owners, coaches, teammates, fans, etc)
- Transgender athletes
- Formation of professional women's softball team or women's soccer league
- Pro/All-star games
- Player recruitment, funding, revenue, profitability, etc of "National" teams (World Competitions/Tournaments other than the Olympics)
- Economic factors that lead to the strengthening or worsening of a team's performance (over time).
- Link between athletics and the healthcare system/medical industry
- Link between sporting events and crime
- Green Bay Packers' "community ownership" structure
- Team/franchise valuations - are they inflated?
- How depressions/recessions affect the industry.
- The impact of COVID on the industry in an area that was not discussed.
- Unethical practices within the sports industry (e.g. bribes, fraud)
- Youth sports
- Other professional sports and/or national/international leagues (e.g. rugby, cricket, BMX, NASCAR, etc)

Additional Notes

In past semesters, students have gathered their own data and analyzed it. Some have performed a basic analysis looking at general trends, correlations, etc. Other students, those who have taken Econometrics, have constructed an empirical model and run a regression. This type of analysis is not required nor expected in this course.

If you would like to gather data through surveys of persons at Muhlenberg College, this requires additional permissions so please let me know of your interest in doing this so that we can begin the approval process through IRB.

Final Project Assessment

1. Introduction - Well thought out research question. Motivates individual research question. Clear and accurate thesis statement. Outlines plan to answer the research question. **(5%)**
2. Quality of individual analysis. Supporting evidence is provided for claims. Analysis is accurate. Appropriate depth and breadth. Demonstrates critical thinking skill and deductive reasoning skills. **(30%)**
3. Use of external resources - data collection and outside resources. Scholarly/primary sources are use. **(10%)**
4. Chooses the appropriate topics/theories/models to incorporate in analysis. Understanding of the course material as it relates to the topic of the essay. Appropriate use of economic terminology and concepts. **(25%)**
5. Congruency in analysis and final conclusion. **(5%)**
6. Economical Writing – organization, flow/transitions, clarity, conciseness, and grammar. Clarity of figures. **(15%)**
7. **Group Components:** Abstract, Introduction (clarity in discussing project's objectives, motivates the broad topic, establishes connection between the research questions), Presentation (ability to highlight main findings, clarity/flow of presentation, ability to answer questions). **(10%)**