
Festival Project Guidelines

The Big Picture

The main focus of our course is the influence of institutions on economic outcomes across a wide range of societies both past and present. The project for the COLL 300 academic festival will build off of this with particular attention paid to the way that institutions shape the economic decisions and outcomes of individuals. The goal is for you to explore a variety of institutions that shape personal decisions and socioeconomic status, researching the academic literature on these topics and then conveying the key details to a general audience in the most accessible way possible, a game.

With your group, you are going to redesign *The Game of Life*, modifying the choices and consequences to mimic the range of institutions influencing individuals in different societies. This will range from introducing realistic variation in the strength of property rights to thinking about how different approaches to marriage and divorce impact economic outcomes. Each modification you make must be tied to the academic literature on institutions and economics.



Figure 1: *The Game of Life*, Hasbro Gaming.

The end product will be a new Econ 300 version of the game that will be playable by visitors to the academic festival at the end of the semester. We will also set aside time in class for groups to highlight their favorite modifications to the game and discuss the economics behind those modifications.

General Instructions

You will complete this project in groups of ten students, leading to fifteen groups total. If there are students you would like to work with in a group, have one student from your group email me the names of everyone in your group by **February 8th**. You can email me any number of names for your group up to ten total. After receiving these group requests, I will then randomly assign any individuals who did not request a specific group to the existing groups of fewer than ten students and to new groups. I will post the final group assignments on **Monday, February 11th**.

Each group will be responsible for producing one complete set of rules for the game and 20 action cards. The action cards will be combined into a complete class deck of 300 cards for the academic festival. Attendees at the festival will then get the opportunity to play *The Game of Life* using this deck of action cards and their choice of the fifteen different sets of game rules. Groups may also design and print their own game pieces for the academic festival using the 3D printers in [Makerspace](#) (this is totally optional but fun). Below are more details on the rules and the action cards.

Game Rules

There is a pdf version of the standard rules for *The Game of Life* posted on Blackboard. Use these as your starting point to get a sense of how to organize your rules and to think about exactly what your rules should cover. You are allowed to be as creative as you like in rewriting the rules but keep in mind that your rules must still work with the existing game board. If you would like, you could modify the game pieces, printing a new set of pieces to go with your rules. Introducing your own pieces is not required.

The goal when writing a new set of rules is to introduce more realistic and interesting outcomes in the game. Note that the rules cover marriage, educational investments, home ownership, children and occupations. All of these are areas where formal and informal institutions affect individuals choices and the economic consequences of those choices. For each of these areas, you should modify the rules to incorporate details of how institutions interact with decisions in the real world. For example, you could modify the rules associated with marriage to incorporate the role of dowries or brideprices. At least one rule modification should relate to the Coll 300 theme of ceremony.

For each modification that you make to incorporate real institutions, you should also find a relevant academic book or journal article that pertains to the economics of that institution and write a two- to three-sentence summary of the main takeaway from that study or an interesting result from the study. Returning to the marriage example, if I introduced the concept of brideprices in the rules, I may associate them with the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* article “The Economics of Dowry and Brideprice” by Siwan Anderson and give the following summary:

Economic models suggest that brideprices are a consequence of competition in the marriage market and the role of outside options. Greater earning opportunities

outside of marriage for females or greater competition among males for female wives have historically led to higher brideprices.

Your final set of rules should be submitted as an editable document (e.g., a Word file or a Google Doc). For each modification you made, include a footnote that contains your summary of the the academic work you found and the bibliographic details for the academic work.

Action Cards



Figure 2: Examples of actions cards from *The Game of Life*, Hasbro Gaming.

There is a pdf posted on Blackboard showing several action cards from *The Game of Life*. These provide examples what the typical action card looks like. Action cards cover a broad range of life events: economic losses from disasters, economic windfalls from inheritances, unexpected medical bills and so on. You will design 20 different action cards. This is where you can get really creative. Any instance in which an institution impacts an individual's economic outcomes can be turned into an action card. Think about paying bribes to officials, changes in property rights, legal bills associated with patent enforcement, tithes to churches, divorce settlements and so on. All of these could be action cards that increase or decrease the size of a player's bank account. At least two of your cards should relate to the Coll 300 theme of ceremony. There are only two limitations on what you can do. You should keep your description of the action down to one or two sentences (so that it fits on a card) and the consequences of the action (the financial gains or losses, changes to family structure, impacts on occupation or home ownership, etc.) should be feasible given the game board, pieces and cards.

As with the game rule modifications, each action card that you create should be linked to an academic work dealing with the economics of institutions and a two- to three-sentence summary of an interesting finding of that work written by you. You should submit your 20 action cards in the form of an editable spreadsheet structured as follows:

- Column 1: The text of the action card (e.g., “Discover and patent a new drug. Spin the wheel to find out if the patent gets enforced. If Red, patent is enforced, collect

100K from the bank. If Black, courts do not enforce the patent, pay 40K to the bank in legal fees.”)

- Column 2: Your two- to three-sentence summary of your interesting finding from academic literature related to the action (e.g., “Using evidence from World’s Fairs, Moser (2005) finds that countries with patents had more diversified innovation than countries without patents. This suggests that patent laws impact the direction of technical change.”)
- Column 3: The APA citation for the original academic article (e.g., Moser, P. (2005). How do patent laws influence innovation? Evidence from nineteenth-century world’s fairs. *American Economic Review*, 95(4), 1214-1236.) Note that this can be easily copied and pasted from Google Scholar by clicking on the quotation mark link below an article in the search results.
- Column 4: The URL linking to the original academic article
(e.g. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/0002828054825501>).

The Academic Festival

Once all of the groups submit the projects, I will combine the groups’ work and print copies of the rules and action cards to create game sets for the Academic Festival. When doing so, I will include QR codes on the rules and action cards that link to a website displaying the relevant academic literature summaries and citation details (this is why it is particularly important that groups follow the formatting guidelines given above). I will bring these to the Academic Festival at which point all of the groups will set up the games and help attendees play the games while explaining their modifications and the associated academic literature.

Timeline

Below are the important dates regarding the group projects. Please remember that attendance at the Academic Festival is mandatory for all on-campus Coll 300 students. However, your presentation of the games at the festival is ungraded. The festival is a chance for you to show off your hard work and enjoy the work of other Coll 300 students in a relaxed environment. For the group work days, we will not hold lecture but the classroom will be available if groups want to use the space. Feel free to email questions or stop by office hours at any point throughout the semester to talk about your projects.

Date	Event
February 8th	last day to email group requests
February 11th	groups assigned
April 3rd and 5th	group work days (no lecture)
April 17th	game rules and cards due
April 19th, 22nd and 24th	In-class group presentations
April 24th, 5pm - 7pm	Academic Festival

Evaluation

This project is worth 20 percent of your overall grade. Your grade on the project will be based on my assessment of your rules, cards and summaries of the academic literature, my assessment of your group's presentation in class, and student self-assessments evaluating students' own work and that of their group overall. Throughout the semester, I am happy to provide feedback on drafts of projects and explain where they are or are not meeting my expectations.