ECON 100 - Writing Assignment Due: Thursday, December 1, 2011
50 points

Robert H. Frank is the Henrietta Johnson Louis Professor of Management at Cornell University’s Johnson Graduate School of Management. His many awards include the Apple Distinguished Teaching Award and the Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought. His monthly column, entitled Economic Sense, appears in the New York Times.

Dr. Frank is the author of several economics principles textbooks, and also books targeted for the general reader who is curious about how economics might shed light on everyday decisions. For that latter audience, he identifies oddities in the way the world works and poses questions that beg for a reasoned response. He describes a person who engages in this questioning and mystery-solving as being an economic naturalist. For many years, Dr. Frank has artfully incorporated this economic naturalist approach into his economics courses at Cornell University. He regularly assigns his students writing assignments in which they pose interesting questions, based upon their observations of the world, and attempt to explain what they observe using basic economic analysis. In 2007, Dr. Frank collected the best ideas from his classes and his own observations and published The Economic Naturalist: In Search of Explanations for Everyday Enigmas (New York: Basic Books)

This writing assignment is similar to one that Dr. Frank requires of his principles students at Cornell University. Using a maximum of 500 words, write an essay in which you pose an interesting question about the world you observe and then use basic economic analysis to explain why things happen the way you observe. Your question MUST be original, and not one found in Dr. Frank’s books, or similar popular publications by other authors, such as Freakonomics. Anyone found to have submitted work based upon existing published examples will earn zero points for this assignment.

To begin, please go to www.robert-h-frank.com/ENIntroduction.pdf and read the introduction to Dr. Frank’s The Economic Naturalist: In Search of Explanations for Everyday Enigmas. This important first step will familiarize you with the types of questions you want to consider and the way in which you should approach your analysis.

In order to ensure that you begin this assignment properly and have a solid foundation upon which to build your essay, you must submit your question via email no later than Monday, November 21. Actually, your question should be in the form of a brief paragraph containing a few sentences that specifically outlines the question you want to analyze. Students who fail to complete this step by November 21 will lose 5 points from the assignment total.

The final paper, submitted no later than Thursday, December 1, must be NO MORE THAN 500 words, word processed, double spaced, 12 font. Your name, course name and number, instructor name, date, and title are required.