

Spring 2018 ECO1302 Group Project
Potential Research and Presentation Topics

1. What is “net neutrality” exactly? One of the first appointments made by the Trump Administration was Ajit Pai as chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and in January 2018 the FCC announced its rule-making overturning net neutrality regulations. In your view based upon research, has the FCC deregulated the internet? How and why specifically? Has this been a big policy change since the Obama Administration? Why or why not? Who are the “winners” and “losers” in any internet regulation policy changes under the Trump administration? Is there any on-going resistance by special interests in the court-system against the new FCC rules?
2. President Trump has stated that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is “unfair” and costs American “jobs”. Do you believe after research that this is true? Was or is NAFTA actually “free trade”? Why or why not? What specifically is the status of re-negotiating NAFTA today? What are the points of re-negotiation? Who are the major players in re-negotiation? Who have been or who do you think will be the biggest “winners” and biggest “losers” with any NAFTA re-negotiation? Is there any relationship between those industries who will be protected under a renegotiated NAFTA and the *Economist Magazine* cronyism index?
3. The Empire State Development Corporation (esd.ny.gov/) is the New York state agency which uses tax breaks and other incentives to attract firms to locate to New York state for “job-creation”. Who are some of the major beneficiaries of these incentives, what industries and what firms? What is the average cost per job-created for some of these projects? Have these beneficiaries contributed to the election campaigns of Albany politicians? Has there been any alleged or proven corruption in the granting of special treatment to certain firms? Give specific examples.
4. You can also do the same research and answer the same questions as in 3 above, but relating to the New York City Economic Development Corporation (www.nycedc.com/).

5. During the semester it is anticipated that Amazon will announce its decision as to where to locate its second corporate headquarters, promising to invest more than \$5 billion in its new location. Which city won this bidding war? What did the city's politicians offer Amazon in terms of incentives to locate in their city over their closest competitors? What is the estimated "cost per job created" for this corporate welfare? What is the cost per taxpayer in the chosen city? Also, analyze and critique the rationale the politicians used for this corporate welfare in the guise of "economic development".
6. In 2017 the EU announced that it is fining Google a record \$2.7 billion for violation of anti-trust behavior. What exactly is Google accused of doing and what is the status of payment of this fine? Who are the biggest "winners" for any required changes to Google's business practices in the EU? When the European Commission anti-trust officials used monopoly behavior market measures they did not include Amazon as one of Google's competitors in the "market" as defined by the regulators, and this has been criticized as unfair by American tech firms. After research do you believe that the European Commission is over-regulating American tech firms in the EU? Why or why not? Have US anti-trust regulators taken any counter-vailing measures against EU-based tech firms?
7. Apple is accused of tax evasion by the EU, and in 2016 received a retro-active tax bill of \$14.5 billion for underpayment of income taxes to Ireland. After research do you find that Apple underpaid its Irish tax bill? Isn't the reason many firms locate to Ireland for access to the EU market is that Ireland has the lowest corporate income tax? Does the European Commission have the right to set tax rates for individual countries within the EU? Has Ireland been fighting the EU over the Apple ruling on its tax rates? Has Apple paid this retro-active tax yet? Why or why not, what is the status of this case today?
8. Third parties complain that the US political system is a "duopoly" controlled by the Democrats and Republicans to the exclusion of for example the Green and Libertarian Parties. After research do you find that there is indeed a political duopoly in the United States? Why or why not? Is there any reform that you would recommend for the US political system to allow more competition amongst political parties?

9. In late 2017 AT&T's proposed \$85 billion take-over of Time Warner was blocked by the Trump Administration's Department of Justice. What is the status of this case today? Has or is AT&T making any "concessions" to regulators to allow the deal to go through, for example is the proposed combined firm being required to sell any assets to prevent 'monopoly power'? How does the Trump Administration's response to the deal relate to the Administration's rhetoric about "deregulation"? After research using this take-over as a case-study, does it appear that the Trump administration is deregulating the media, telecoms and technology sectors? Why or why not? Who are the "winners" and "losers" in AT&T's proposed take-over of Time Warner?

10. Since late 2017 Disney has been negotiating to take over certain assets of 21st Century Fox. What is the Trump Administration's regulatory position on this takeover? Has or is Disney making any "concessions" to regulators to allow the deal to go through, for example is the proposed combined firm being required to sell any assets to prevent 'monopoly power'? How does the Trump Administration's response to the deal relate to the Administration's rhetoric about "deregulation"? After research using this take-over as a case-study, does it appear that the Trump administration is deregulating the media, telecoms and technology sectors? Why or why not? Who are the "winners" and "losers" in Disney's proposed take-over of 21st Century Fox?

11. Some sports and entertainment ticket providers accuse Ticketmaster of exercising monopoly power in the market. After research, do you believe this is true, why or why not? Has Ticketmaster made any "concessions" to appease its critics? Can you give examples? Based on your research do you have any recommendations for making entertainment ticketing more competitive? You can answer the same questions surrounding Live Nation as a promoter exercising monopoly power.

12. One of the Trump Administration's first (and failed) legislative goals was to overturn the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (Obamacare). What is the status of federally-mandated and federally-funded healthcare in the USA today? For example, did Trump's executive order allowing an interstate market for healthcare (rather than giving each state a monopoly over insurance regulation) reduce healthcare inflation? Are the health-insurance companies still receiving taxpayer-funded subsidies? Has there been a change in the unfunded liabilities of Medicare and Medicaid? What is the state-of-play in national healthcare policy (healthcare being 15% of the US economy) today? Who have been the "winners" and "losers" under the Trump Administration healthcare policies?

13. The *New York Times* began a series of articles in late 2017 finding that special interests have been successful in lobbying the Trump Administration's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to overturn at least 60 environmental regulations. Using the *Time's* research, in addition to other sources, who are the biggest "winners" and "losers" under the Trump EPA? What are the major changes between EPA rule-making between the Obama and Trump Administrations? What are some of the estimated environment costs, and economic benefits, expected and realized under the Trump Administration's EPA?

14. We have defined that under fiat-money, central banks and treasury officials have a monopoly power over money issuance. In the USA Bitcoin has been declared an asset by the US IRS (so that Bitcoin appreciations are subject to capital gains taxes), limiting currency competition. Are there any fiat-currency regimes who are encouraging crypto-currencies, if so how? What other measures are nation-states and central banks doing to discourage money competition through new media?