

Professional Leave Report Cover Sheet

Name: Kevin Capehart

Department: Economics

College: Craig School of Business

Leave taken: Sabbatical Difference in Pay Professional Leave without Pay

Time Period: Fall
 Spring 2023
 Academic Year
 Other

Your report will be sent to your Dean for your PAF and to the Library Archives.

Post-Sabbatical Report for Spring 2023 Sabbatical from Kevin W. Capehart, Associate Professor, Economics Department, Craig School, California State University, Fresno

In Fall 2021, I applied for a one-semester sabbatical during the Spring 2023 semester. I was granted that sabbatical. I have now returned from it. Per APM 360, “Each faculty member, by the end of the semester following the completion of a sabbatical [...] leave, shall submit [...] a written report of the leave’s activities [...].” This document, which is being written and will be submitted during the Fall 2023 semester that followed the completion of my Spring 2023 sabbatical, shall serve as my post-sabbatical written report. APM 360 specifies that the report “shall include: a) the accomplishments of the leave in relation to the goals of the original proposal; b) modifications, if any, to the original proposal, and the circumstances that necessitated these modifications; c) the objectives of the original proposal (if any) that were not accomplished; and d) anticipated outcomes for the near future as a consequence of the leave’s activities.” The rest of the main text of this document follows that structure. A copy of the original sabbatical leave proposal is also included as an appendix to this document, as requested by APM 360.

(a) Accomplishments of the leave in relation to the goals of the original proposal

Major accomplishments included giving two presentations related to my sabbatical research during my sabbatical leave.

For the first of my two presentations, I was one of 10 speakers for the day-long online/virtual conference entitled “Economics: The Tragic Science?” or “Is Economics the Tragic Science? Critical responses to DeMartino’s harm-centric economics.” That conference was motivated by George DeMartino’s 2022 book *The Tragic Science: How Economists Cause Harm (Even As They Aspire To Do Good)*. The conference was organized by the LCBER (London Centre for Business and Entrepreneurship Research) of the LSBU (London South Bank University) Business School. It was held Thursday, March 30, 2023, from 10:30am to 5:00pm UK time ([Link](#)). My talk was entitled “What’s the Harm in Economics Textbooks? A Natural Language Processing Approach.” That presentation was on the prevalence of any MFD keywords in principles of economics (and other) books; see my original sabbatical proposal for an elaboration of what aspect of my research I’m referring to when I say that. That talk specifically focused on the (in)frequency of the Harm (i.e., the “vice” words of the Care-Harm foundation) MFD keywords in economics textbooks relative to other books, and what that suggests about economists (in)attention to harm.

The second of my two presentations was during the AFIT (Association for Institutional Thought) annual meeting at the 2023 WSSA (World–formerly, Western–Social Science Association) conference in Tempe, Arizona. My talk was on Thursday, April 13, 2023, and it was entitled “Moral Foundations Characteristics of Economists: Efficiency, Inequality, and Beyond.”

That research related to the part of my sabbatical proposal about trying to unpack the moral/ethical lessons of economics education. It was survey-based research that drew upon the Moral Foundations Theory that underlies the above-mentioned MFD keywords.

(b) Modifications, if any, to the original proposal, and the circumstances that necessitated these modifications

There were no modifications that I would consider outside the norms of typical research processes between the sabbatical I proposed in Fall 2021 and the sabbatical I had in Spring 2023, but to address this more fully:

Giving at least one presentation related to my sabbatical research was not part of the original proposal (and I ended up giving two such presentations as discussed above), but enough relevant opportunities came up to accomplish that. The above-mentioned conference on DeMartino's book was especially fortuitous as I felt that part of my research connected well to his book. The other above-mentioned conference also gave me a similar opportunity to share another part of my research.

(c) The objectives of the original proposal (if any) that were not accomplished

I continue to prepare at least one manuscript for submission and hopefully eventual publication.

(d) Anticipated outcomes for the near future as a consequence of the leave's activities

I plan to follow up last year's presentation with another presentation related to my sabbatical research at the AFIT meeting during the 2024 WSSA conference to be held during the upcoming Spring 2024 semester. And as stated above, I continue to prepare at least one manuscript for submission and hopefully eventual publication. I also remain interested in teaching an "Ethics and Economics" or similar course, although in the nearer near future, I plan to incorporate and extend my sabbatical research when teaching ECON 100A Intermediate Microeconomics again in the upcoming Spring 2024 after teaching it for my first time here at Fresno State in Spring 2022.

APPENDIX: COPY OF ORIGINAL SPRING 2022 SABBATICAL LEAVE PROPOSAL

Moral Lessons of Introductory Economics

Sabbatical Proposal by Kevin W. Capehart

Section 1. The Proposal

The following is a proposal for a one-semester sabbatical during either Fall 2022 or (preferably) Spring 2023 for myself, Associate Professor Kevin W. Capehart, Economics Department, Craig School of Business. The structure of this proposal directly follows the [outline for a sabbatical proposal](#) provided by Fresno State's Faculty Affairs Office.

(a) Summary statement outlining objectives/goals of my sabbatical

Economics education has been accused of promoting anti-social and other immoral, amoral, or morally suspect beliefs and behaviors (such as selfishness, cynicism, and sexism) among its students. For a one-semester sabbatical, I propose to engage in a scholarly research project that I have entitled "Moral Lessons of Introductory Economics." This project, which I have already conceived of and engaged in preliminary research towards (as discussed in Sec. 1.b below), would use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to study introductory economics textbooks and other resources for explicit or implicit moral standards and lessons. Through that study, I would identify specific economic content that may plausibly promote the sort of morally suspect beliefs and behaviors that economics has been accused of promoting. Other ways of framing that same content or other, different content that could avoid promoting those beliefs and behaviors or that may instead promote more laudable beliefs and behaviors such as pro-social ones would also be identified. The submission of at least one peer-reviewed journal article would be the most immediate output of my sabbatical. This project would also lay the foundation for further research into the moral consequences of economics education (as discussed in Sec. 2.b) and, moreover, for pedagogical changes such as centering moral considerations as a means to develop students' critical thinking skills (as discussed in the same section). This proposed sabbatical would therefore benefit me as both a scholar and a teacher (as discussed further in Sec. 2 below) and those benefits to myself would redound to the benefit of my department, school, and university (as discussed in Sec. 3 below). This proposed sabbatical would not involve drawing on any California State University (CSU) resources during the sabbatical, except perhaps my university library account in order to obtain copies of any articles or books that I have not already obtained copies of.

(b) *Demonstration that this is a well-conceived program, including preliminary research*

An extensive empirical literature has tried to study whether economics education promotes the sort of morally suspect beliefs and behaviors that it has been accused of promoting.¹ It is not implausible that such beliefs and behaviors could be promoted, especially by an education in the so-called “neoclassical” economics that still dominates undergraduate economics today. The description of—and arguably the prescription for—human behavior that lies at the heart of neoclassical economics implies that individuals would violate any social norm, moral standard, or divine or human law if their cost-benefit calculations yielded the solution that it was in their self interest to do so. It seems plausible that students schooled in such assumptions may become more selfish themselves and more distrustful of others or, at least, such schooling may be selecting *for* students who are already more selfish and distrustful while selecting *against* students who are more selfless and trusting.

Although the moral consequences of economics education have been subject to extensive empirical study, the studies have yielded mostly mixed conclusions as to whether economics education indoctrinates students towards new beliefs or behaviors and/or selects for or against students with certain pre-existing beliefs and behaviors.² Mixed conclusions are perhaps not surprising. Like most disciplines, economics does not offer just a monist perspective on its subject matter and instead offers a plurality of perspectives. That variety of perspectives could lend itself to a variety of possible lessons in morals and other matters. And like any discipline, the effectiveness with which teachers teach or students learn a lesson can vary widely. Yet even if the lessons being taught and the effectiveness with which they were taught were more uniform, existing studies have generally not been designed in a way that would yield clear conclusions, especially if beliefs and behaviors tend to be strongly ingrained and/or context dependent. Existing studies have generally studied small groups of students who have self-selected into different treatments (by selecting into or out of certain majors or courses) and studied how those students change or vary with respect to measures of anti- or pro-sociality and morality or immorality that are only loosely or circuitously linked to specific economic content. Existing studies have generally *not* studied the effects of targeted interventions of specific economic content on a large number of randomly selected treatment and control subjects with respect to tightly linked measures of sociality or morality.³

The purpose of my sabbatical would be to identify specific economic content from introductory economics textbooks and other resources that can be tightly linked to the sort of morally suspect beliefs and behaviors economics education has been accused of promoting. Relatedly, I would also seek to identify economic content that could avoid promoting those sorts of beliefs and behaviors or that may instead promote beliefs and behaviors that are pro-social and morally laudable or at least not immoral.

¹ For recent reviews of the literature on economics education and anti-social or morally suspect beliefs and behaviors, see Simon Niklas Hellmich, 2019, “Are people trained in economics ‘different,’ and if so, why? A literature review,” *The American Economist*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 246–268, and the same author’s “Social psychological aspects of ‘making’ economists: A review of the nature versus nurture debate,” 2020, *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 23–50. For a book-length treatment of these concerns, see Stephen Marglin, 2008, *The Dismal Science: How Thinking Like An Economist Undermines Community*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. For recent studies on economics education and sexism, see Valentina Paredes, M. Daniele Paserman, Francisco Pino, 2020, “Does economics make you sexist?,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 27070, and András Tilcsik, 2021, “Statistical discrimination and the rationalization of stereotypes,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 86., no. 1, pp. 93–122.

² On that mixed evidence, see Hellmich 2019 and 2020, *op cit.*

³ Notable exceptions include Tilcsik, 2021, *op cit.*, which shows that subjects taught about so-called “statistical discrimination” are more likely to engage in discriminatory stereotyping when making hiring decisions.

Doing so obviously requires standards against which to judge the sociality or morality of beliefs or behaviors. To identify such content and standards, I would use two approaches. The first approach starts with standards and then tries to derive tightly linked economic content. The second approach starts with economic content and then tries to derive tightly linked moral standards.

To clarify those two approaches, my first approach will be informed by the moral standards explicitly stated in or implicitly suggested by the existing literature on this subject. Although the various measures of sociality and morality that previous studies have used are generally only loosely linked to the economic content that students were taught (as stated above), those measures reflect moral standards. For example, as part of one famous study, economics students were asked whether they would return a lost envelope that contained 100 dollars.⁴ The moral standard implicit in that question would seem to be that lost envelopes full of money should be returned. Such a standard could be defended from deontological, consequentialist, and perhaps other perspectives; it can also be taken as a moral standard arrived at through a descriptive ethics of sorts because the authors of that study apparently believed there was an important difference between keeping and returning a lost envelope full of money. Many other standards can be derived in the same manner from the existing literature. Such standards can also often be linked more tightly and less circuitously to economic content. To take the same example from above, the methods of neoclassical economics could be used to rationalize any choice anyone makes, including anything from returning the envelope with all of the money in it, to taking all or some of the money, to never bothering to pick up the envelope in the first place, depending on the expected costs and benefits associated with returning the envelope and taking money from it. Yet the way in which the economics of a lost envelope is taught could plausibly offer a moral legitimation or delegitimation of certain actions. An economic lesson could offer a rationalization and thereby a legitimation of taking enough money out of the envelope to compensate the individual for the time, energy, or other resources it takes them to return the envelope. An alternative economic lesson could argue that we would be “rational fools” (to use the phrase Amartya Sen uses in a similar context) if we could not trust each other to return lost envelopes without stealing their contents.⁵ An entire journal article could probably be written about the economics and ethics of returning lost letters, but again, I am interested in using the above-illustrated approach to identify a number of moral standards and then, from those standards, derive relevant economic content.

My second approach will also identify standards and content, but will use the latter to derive the former. In particular, I will identify morally salient content in introductory economics textbooks and then, from that content, derive relevant moral standards. The economics textbooks I will study are as follows. I will study four introductory economics textbooks that a recent study focused upon.⁶ The four books are: a pre-Keynesian textbook; Paul Samuelson’s classic text that is the prototype for modern mainstream economics textbooks; Greg Mankiw’s popular contemporary mainstream book; and the CORE Team’s *The Economy*, which purports to be an alternative to mainstream economics textbooks. I will also study open-access economics textbooks, including the mainstream OpenStax book, a more pluralistic textbook

⁴ The famous study I am referring to here is Robert Frank, Thomas Gilovich, and Dennis Regan, 1993, “Does studying economics inhibit cooperation?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 159–171.

⁵ Amartya K Sen, 1977, “Rational fools: A critique of the behavioral foundations of economic theory,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 317–344. Sen suggests a person would be a “rational fool” and “social moron” if, when asked by a stranger to mail an envelope, the person says “yes” because he/she is secretly “determined to open the envelope and check whether it contains something valuable” (Sen 1997, *op cit.*, pp. 332, 336).

⁶ The recent study I am referring to here is Samuel Bowles and Wendy Carlin, 2020, “What students learn in Economics 101: Time for a change,” *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 176–214.

that was based on extending that OpenStax book, and another somewhat pluralistic open-access textbook.⁷ I will also study four economics textbooks that are not free, but represent more pluralistic treatments of introductory economics.⁸ In addition to economics textbooks, I will also study textbooks from other social science disciplines.⁹ Those other social-science textbooks will provide a basis for comparison and contrast. I am especially interested in chapters of anthropology and sociology textbooks that deal with economic activity.

To identify morally salient content in those texts, I will use the qualitative, close reading methods familiar to all scholars, as well as quantitative, “distant reading” methods that have become popular in the digital humanities and other disciplines. My main distant reading approach will be a dictionary-based approach. I will use the “Moral Foundations Dictionary” (MFD), which is a set of key terms created by a group of social psychologists to identify and judge the moral content embedded in a text.¹⁰ The MFD has been used to study the moral content of a variety of texts, including religious sermons, social-media posts, speeches by politicians, statements by political parties, voting guides, and news articles. I will use the MFD to study the moral content of introductory economics textbooks. Obtaining copies of the above-mentioned textbooks was no small task, especially for the books that are not open access ones, but I have now obtained access to copies of them that are amenable to text analysis.

A discussion of the MFD and a strictly quantitative application of it to economics and other social-science textbooks could probably be a journal article by itself. I have engaged in preliminary research in this regard. My preliminary findings suggest that: most economics textbooks have roughly similar amounts of moral content; possible exceptions include that more mainstream textbooks have somewhat less moral content than most (but not all) more pluralistic economics textbooks; economics textbooks have significantly less moral content than most other social-science textbooks; and economics textbooks have significantly less moral content than economic-related chapters in anthropology and sociology textbooks. More pluralistic economics textbooks and other social-science textbooks may teach about economic activity in a more morally salient way, therefore.

Those quantitative approaches can be extended to identify the most morally salient passages. To give one example, one of the passages from the CORE book that is flagged as morally salient by these quantitative methods is a passage about the economic impact of racially motivated attacks on Black lives and businesses. A close reading of that passage can suggest what we would hope it would suggest, namely, that hate crimes such as racially motivated violence are abhorrent.

Yet not all passages that include MFD words contain moral content, and it is also possible that passages without any MFD words contain moral content, so close reading is necessary to identify such “false positives” and “false negatives” that are possible when using a dictionary-based approach. Close

⁷ The open-access textbooks I am referring to here are OpenStax’s *Principles of Economics*, Dean et al.’s *Principles of Economics: Scarcity and Social Provisioning*, and Daniel Saros’ *Principles of Political Economy: A Pluralist Approach to Economic Theory*.

⁸ The textbooks I am referring to here are Ha Joon Chang’s *Economics: The User’s Guide*, Geoffrey Schneider’s *The Evolution of Economic Ideas and Systems*, Irene Van Staveran’s *Economics After the Crisis: An Introduction to Economics from a Pluralist and Global Perspective*, and Jonathan Wight’s *Ethics in Economics: An Introduction to Moral Frameworks*.

⁹ The other social-science textbooks I am referring to here are OpenStax’s textbooks such as their sociology textbook. OpenStax does not currently have an anthropology book, so for that discipline I would use the open-access *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology, 2e* from the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges.

¹⁰ There is actually more than one MFD, but here I have in mind Frimer et al.’s widely-used “Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0” (aka the MFD 2.0). Extensions to the MDF (such as Araque et al.’s “MoralStrength” lemmas) and other MFDs (such as Hopp et al.’s “extended MFD”) can also be employed in the same manner.

reading is also ultimately necessary to identify any moral standards that are explicit, implicit, or closely related to any given piece of economic content.

As is hopefully evident from the above-given discussion, this is a project that I have conceived of and engaged in preliminary research towards. It is an ambitious project, but also a doable one with an appropriate amount of dedicated time. Moreover, this project will lay the foundation for pedagogical changes and future research post-sabbatical.

In terms of pedagogical changes: I will not attempt to argue here that economics education should be a form of moral instruction that discourages anti-social and immoral behaviors and beliefs while promoting pro-social and moral ones. The merits and demerits of such a learning goal should be attended to as part of this project (rather than remaining as an implicit premise or unexamined assumption). That learning goal could admittedly be controversial. Yet even if someone rejects that goal (perhaps because it is seen as inappropriate to try to form the moral character of economics students or impossible to teach economics without deforming their moral character), it seems uncontroversial to say that developing critical thinking skills is and should be a goal of economics education, in particular, and higher education, in general. Considerations of whether economics education does or could promote immorality, amorality, sexism, racism, ableism, and so on can be part of developing students' critical thinking skills. Such considerations were the theme of my Spring 2021 offering of my department's senior project course, which was largely built around the question of whether economics education is morally debasing and whether it could be morally enlivening. That course was an opportunity for me to begin to explore the ideas that I am proposing to explore more deeply for my sabbatical. The results of the sabbatical would be incorporated into my introductory courses, upper-division courses, and perhaps a new upper-division course on economics and ethics. The results would be incorporated by centering the moral considerations that my sabbatical seeks to consider.

In terms of future research: Whether the pedagogical changes suggested above are actually pedagogical improvements is a question that I would eventually explore. One method to explore that would be to use my own courses and any courses of collegial colleagues. As I design or redesign lessons within my own courses, I would seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for studies that involve a within- and/or between-subjects design with a "control" lesson similar to traditional lessons and a "treatment" lesson that centers moral considerations. Another, similar method for exploration would be to use general population-based survey experiments.¹¹ Survey experiments can avoid the above-discussed small-sample and selection issues that arise when using convenience samples of students who have self-selected into certain majors and courses. I would design lessons short enough and accessible enough to be embedded within a survey without too much attrition and then seek IRB approval for surveys that randomly assign control and treatment lessons to survey respondents drawn from a general population. Their responses can be used to study the treatment effect of a given lesson without relying on convenience samples of students.

¹¹ On these, see, e.g., Diana Mutz, 2011, *Population-Based Survey Experiments*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

(c) Detailed procedures by which the objects are to be accomplished

Procedures by which the project is to be accomplished are detailed below. These detailed procedures also serve as a timeline of what would be accomplished within no more and no less than one semester.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Week</i>	<i>Procedures</i>
1	1	I will use the Hellmich 2019 and 2020 literature reviews cited above and the dozens of papers reviewed therein in order to collect studies (such as the lost envelope study discussed above) that are relevant to this project. Some studies have already been collected as part of the aforementioned Spring 2021 offering of my department's senior project course. This is the only point at which I might draw on a CSU resource, namely, my university library account.
“ ”	2	While continuing the collection of studies, I will identify the measures of sociality or morality used by each study (such as whether a person self-reports that they would return a lost envelope full of money) and take special note of any reasoning offered by the authors for the use of those measures. I will then itemize the measures by how commonly they are used across different studies. Some measures of sociality and morality have already been identified as part of the aforementioned senior project course.
“ ”	3	Starting with the most commonly used measures and ignoring measures that are uncommonly used unless they are exceptionally interesting, I will consider each measure. For each measure, I will identify at least two framings of economic content that could plausibly offer a moral legitimation or delegitimation of the relevant beliefs or behaviors (such as returning the lost envelope or stealing money from it, to use the same example discussed above). Some preliminary work in this regard (for the 12 items in the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen scale, in particular) has been done as part of the aforementioned senior project course.
“ ”	4	I will continue to develop and refine the framings of economic content, which will be the most challenging aspect of this first, qualitative approach. Relatedly, I will begin to develop lesson plans for my own courses as well as a small number of framings that are short enough and accessible enough to be well-suited for general population-based surveys. That work will be revisited at the end of my sabbatical in preparation for post-sabbatical pedagogical changes and further research, as noted below.
2	5	I will have dedicated writing time to draft article(s) based on the first, qualitative approach.
“ ”	6	“ ”
“ ”	7	While continuing to revise the draft of the article(s) on the first, qualitative approach as appropriate, I will pursue the second, quantitative approach discussed above. Preliminary procedures that have already been accomplished and that were discussed above include collecting copies of the aforementioned textbooks that are amenable to text analysis and using the MFD to perform preliminary analysis of the moral content of those books. I will revisit that preliminary work to ensure it is a strong foundation from which to move forward.

“ ”	8	Extending that preliminary research, I will use “distant reading” approaches to identify the most morally salient passages based on the prevalence of any MFD words. I will also identify each textbook’s most distinctive morally salient passages based on the prevalence of MFD words that are more prevalent in that textbook compared to other textbooks. I will then use close reading approaches to identify “false positives” among the passages. I will also try to identify any obvious examples of “false negatives” in all other passages that do not contain any of the MFD words.
3	9	Starting with the most morally salient and distinctive passages in each textbook and ignoring false positives, I will consider each passage in the textbook. For each passage, I will identify at least one moral standard that is explicit, implicit, or closely related to the passage (such as the above-given example of disapproval of racially motivated violence).
“ ”	10	I will continue to develop and refine the moral standards suggested by the textbook passages, which will be the most challenging aspect of this second, more quantitative approach. As those standards are identified, I will compare and contrast different economics textbooks with each other and against other social-science textbooks.
“ ”	11	I will have dedicated writing time to draft article(s) based on the second, quantitative approach.
“ ”	12	“ ”
4	13	I will finalize article(s) based on the first and second approaches for submission to peer-reviewed economics education journals
“ ”	14	“ ”
“ ”	15	I will submit article(s). I will then prepare for the above-discussed post-sabbatical pedagogical changes and future research that the sabbatical will have laid the foundation for. In particular, I will prepare lesson plans for the pedagogical changes and prepare IRB paperwork for research in my own courses and in general population-based survey experiments.
“ ”	16	“ ”

The proposed sabbatical would therefore divide its time in a roughly even manner between pursuing the first and second approaches discussed in Sec. 1.b.

(d) Demonstration that the proposed activity cannot be accomplished in less than the leave time, but can be completed in the time requested

As stated above in Sec. 1.b, this is an ambitious project, but also a doable one with an appropriate amount of dedicated time. The appropriate amount of time to accomplish the project is one semester based on the procedures detailed in Sec 1.c above.

(e) Any planned travel

This proposal does not involve any planned travel during the one semester of the sabbatical.

Section 2. Benefits to Myself as a Faculty Member

The following are explanations of how I as a faculty member would benefit from my proposed sabbatical.

(a) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to a greater command of subject matter

My proposed sabbatical would help me gain a greater command of a number of relevant subject matters. The above-described scholarly research project requires familiarizing myself with and drawing upon scholarship from a range of fields, including: computer science with its natural language processing; digital humanities with its quantitative approaches to studying text; social psychology for at least one operationalization of morality in Moral Foundations Theory; philosophy with its broader consideration of morality and ethics; other social sciences besides economics such as sociology and anthropology, including for the way in which their disciplines teach student to analyze topics relevant to my own discipline and, furthermore, for their theories of socialization and enculturation to a group that would in this case be “the Econ tribe”¹²; and select subfields within economics such as social economics and institutional economics, which argue that economics is inherently value-laden and reject the notion that economics could ever be value-free.

(b) Explanation of how this study will accomplish a shift in my areas of academic emphasis

My proposed sabbatical would help me shift my areas of emphasis within my own discipline of economics. I have a long-standing desire for both my research and my teaching to be historically grounded, rich, and pluralist (rather than ahistorical, reductionist, and monist). I am embarrassed for myself, but more importantly find it embarrassing for the contemporary economics profession, that I and many other economists can reach the stage I have reached in my career while knowing so little about so many things of supreme importance to a social science such as moral philosophy.

(c) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to improved organization of curricula

As discussed in Sec. 1.b (specifically, the “In terms of pedagogical changes: [...]” paragraph), the results of my sabbatical would lay the foundation for redesigning my introductory and upper-division courses and also perhaps designing a new upper-division course on economics and ethics. Those courses would be designed or redesigned by centering the moral standards and lessons that my sabbatical seeks to consider. My department is a collegial one, so any changes for the better in my existing introductory or upper-division courses would likely be shared with my colleagues who teach the same or similar courses. Whether a new course would indeed be added to our curricula would be a department-level decision, but I have offered a new special topics course in the past and others have offered special topics courses before, too, so my department would presumably be open to offering at least a special topics course on economics and ethics if there is enough anticipated demand.

¹² Here I am borrowing a famous phrase used to refer to the economics profession from Alex Leijonhufvud’s “Life among the Econ,” *Economic Inquiry*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1973, pp. 327–337.

(d) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to a command of advanced teaching methods

As discussed immediately above (in Sec. 1.c) and further above (again, in Sec. 1.b), the results of my sabbatical would lay the foundation for redesigning my introductory and upper-division courses and also perhaps designing a new upper-division course on economics and ethics.

Moreover, as suggested in Sec. 1.b above, my sabbatical would involve a deep consideration of, firstly, the extent to which economics education should be a form of moral instruction and, secondly, the ways in which centering morally salient aspects of economic content can help advance and develop students' critical thinking skills.

Finally, as discussed in Sec. 1.b (specifically, the "In terms of future research: [...]" paragraph), my sabbatical would lay the foundation for exploring whether the pedagogical changes I would seek to develop are actually pedagogical improvements. Although I would of course strive for them to be pedagogical improvements, whether they are or not should ultimately be subjected to study.

(e) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to creative activities in my field

As stated in Sec. 1.a, the most immediate output of my sabbatical will be the submission of at least one peer-reviewed journal article. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the main output that my school values in terms of the research, scholarly, and creative activities of its faculty. Also, as discussed immediately above (in Sec. 1.d) and further above (again, in Sec. 1.b), my sabbatical would lay the foundation for further pedagogical research.

Section 3. Benefit to the University

The above-described benefits to myself as a faculty member will also redound to the benefit of my department, school, and university, as discussed below.

Benefit to my department

When any given faculty member of a department is successful at teaching, that is also a success for their department in terms of being able to attract, retain, and serve its own majors, as well as serve majors of other departments.

The success of any given faculty member of a department in teaching also opens up the possibility for other departmental colleagues to adopt or adapt the successful practices. As discussed above in Sec. 2.c, given that my department is a collegial one, any changes for the better in my existing introductory or upper-division courses would likely be shared with my colleagues who teach the same or similar courses. To the extent those changes are indeed for the better, and to the extent my colleagues adopt or adapt such changes, that would lead to a benefit to my department beyond changes in my own teaching.

As discussed in that same section, my sabbatical may also lay the foundation for designing a new upper-division course. Our majors have expressed a desire for a greater variety of upper-division courses, so to the extent that I and my department decide that I should offer a special topics course on ethics and economics or redesign a course that has not been offered in awhile, that would help enrich the variety of upper-division courses offered by my department.

My department prides itself not only on its teaching, but also its research. When any given faculty member of a department is successful at research, that is also a success for the department in terms of its research productivity. As noted in Sec. 2.e, peer-reviewed journal articles are the main output that my school values in terms of the research, scholarly, and creative activities of its faculty.

The collegiality of my department also opens up the possibility for collaborative research. As discussed at greater length in Sec. 1.b and again briefly in Sec 2.e, my sabbatical would lay the foundation for further research. The two directions for further research discussed above, which were studying convenience samples of students and running general population-based survey experiments, could—and likely would—involve working with colleagues post-sabbatical.

Benefit to my school

The success of an individual faculty member in terms of their teaching and/or research is a success for their school.

My school has also recently received new standards from its accrediting body and a new Dean. Amid those changes in direction and leadership, our school is rededicating itself to making a positive societal impact through its teaching and research, as well as rededicating itself to supporting student diversity through inclusive teaching and learning.

Although I do not believe that I or my colleagues *intend* to promote anti-social or other morally suspect beliefs and behaviors in our students, and although I believe that our department is probably better than other economics departments at *not* promoting such things, it is nevertheless the case that if the

accusations against economics education are true—if economics education does morally debase its students, even unintentionally or only slightly—then that moral debasement is almost by definition a *negative* societal impact. It would seem to be the *opposite* of an impact for the betterment of society.

Economics is also one of the majors, along with finance, computer science, and engineering, for which women and other historically minoritized groups are underrepresented and exceptionally so. That is true nationally and even true at our school to some extent. The reasons for underrepresentation at a national level are much-debated, but an argument in line with the perspective of this proposed sabbatical is that there are biases in the methods and topics of mainstream economics.¹³ If the methods of economics take for granted the existence of discriminatory beliefs and discount the consequences of those beliefs in terms of advantaging some and disadvantaging others, or if discrimination is simply ignored as a topic of interest to economists, then it would not be surprising if economics education tends to attract some, fail to attract or even repel others, and in doing so, tend to promote or at least not discourage sexism, racism, or other discriminatory beliefs or behaviors. The direction of one's moral compass (so to speak) cannot and should not be equated with their gender, race/ethnicity, etc., but similar arguments about biased methods or topics could be made to explain differences between economics majors and others with respect to other measures of sociality or morality.

Designing and redesigning economics education to discourage or at least not promote selfishness, cynicism, callousness, sexism, racism, ableism and other anti-social or morally suspect beliefs and behaviors would therefore help my school advance its efforts to generate positive societal impacts and support diversity and inclusion.

Benefit to my university

The success of an individual faculty member in terms of their teaching and/or research is a success for any university such as Fresno State that values both teaching and research. The fact that Fresno State values both teaching and research (rather than only one or the other) also makes research on teaching especially valuable. Not all institutions would necessarily value research on teaching, but Fresno State is one of the institutions that does.

Our university's diversity and inclusion efforts, which are similar to my school's, would also be supported for the same reasons that my proposed sabbatical would support my school's efforts in that regard.

¹³ See, e.g., Susan Feiner and Bruce Roberts, 1990, "Hidden by the Invisible Hand: Neoclassical economic theory and the textbook treatment of race and gender," *Gender and Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 159–181.

Section 4. Previous Leaves

I have never been awarded a sabbatical or difference-in-pay leave, so there are no reports on past leaves to attach to this proposal.

This concludes my proposal. Thank you to any and all parties involved in the consideration of it.

Moral Lessons of Introductory Economics

Sabbatical Proposal by Kevin W. Capehart

Section 1. The Proposal

The following is a proposal for a one-semester sabbatical during either Fall 2022 or (preferably) Spring 2023 for myself, Associate Professor Kevin W. Capehart, Economics Department, Craig School of Business. The structure of this proposal directly follows the [outline for a sabbatical proposal](#) provided by Fresno State's Faculty Affairs Office.

(a) Summary statement outlining objectives/goals of my sabbatical

Economics education has been accused of promoting anti-social and other immoral, amoral, or morally suspect beliefs and behaviors (such as selfishness, cynicism, and sexism) among its students. For a one-semester sabbatical, I propose to engage in a scholarly research project that I have entitled "Moral Lessons of Introductory Economics." This project, which I have already conceived of and engaged in preliminary research towards (as discussed in Sec. 1.b below), would use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to study introductory economics textbooks and other resources for explicit or implicit moral standards and lessons. Through that study, I would identify specific economic content that may plausibly promote the sort of morally suspect beliefs and behaviors that economics has been accused of promoting. Other ways of framing that same content or other, different content that could avoid promoting those beliefs and behaviors or that may instead promote more laudable beliefs and behaviors such as pro-social ones would also be identified. The submission of at least one peer-reviewed journal article would be the most immediate output of my sabbatical. This project would also lay the foundation for further research into the moral consequences of economics education (as discussed in Sec. 2.b) and, moreover, for pedagogical changes such as centering moral considerations as a means to develop students' critical thinking skills (as discussed in the same section). This proposed sabbatical would therefore benefit me as both a scholar and a teacher (as discussed further in Sec. 2 below) and those benefits to myself would redound to the benefit of my department, school, and university (as discussed in Sec. 3 below). This proposed sabbatical would not involve drawing on any California State University (CSU) resources during the sabbatical, except perhaps my university library account in order to obtain copies of any articles or books that I have not already obtained copies of.

(b) *Demonstration that this is a well-conceived program, including preliminary research*

An extensive empirical literature has tried to study whether economics education promotes the sort of morally suspect beliefs and behaviors that it has been accused of promoting.¹ It is not implausible that such beliefs and behaviors could be promoted, especially by an education in the so-called “neoclassical” economics that still dominates undergraduate economics today. The description of—and arguably the prescription for—human behavior that lies at the heart of neoclassical economics implies that individuals would violate any social norm, moral standard, or divine or human law if their cost-benefit calculations yielded the solution that it was in their self interest to do so. It seems plausible that students schooled in such assumptions may become more selfish themselves and more distrustful of others or, at least, such schooling may be selecting *for* students who are already more selfish and distrustful while selecting *against* students who are more selfless and trusting.

Although the moral consequences of economics education have been subject to extensive empirical study, the studies have yielded mostly mixed conclusions as to whether economics education indoctrinates students towards new beliefs or behaviors and/or selects for or against students with certain pre-existing beliefs and behaviors.² Mixed conclusions are perhaps not surprising. Like most disciplines, economics does not offer just a monist perspective on its subject matter and instead offers a plurality of perspectives. That variety of perspectives could lend itself to a variety of possible lessons in morals and other matters. And like any discipline, the effectiveness with which teachers teach or students learn a lesson can vary widely. Yet even if the lessons being taught and the effectiveness with which they were taught were more uniform, existing studies have generally not been designed in a way that would yield clear conclusions, especially if beliefs and behaviors tend to be strongly ingrained and/or context dependent. Existing studies have generally studied small groups of students who have self-selected into different treatments (by selecting into or out of certain majors or courses) and studied how those students change or vary with respect to measures of anti- or pro-sociality and morality or immorality that are only loosely or circuitously linked to specific economic content. Existing studies have generally *not* studied the effects of targeted interventions of specific economic content on a large number of randomly selected treatment and control subjects with respect to tightly linked measures of sociality or morality.³

The purpose of my sabbatical would be to identify specific economic content from introductory economics textbooks and other resources that can be tightly linked to the sort of morally suspect beliefs and behaviors economics education has been accused of promoting. Relatedly, I would also seek to identify economic content that could avoid promoting those sorts of beliefs and behaviors or that may instead promote beliefs and behaviors that are pro-social and morally laudable or at least not immoral.

¹ For recent reviews of the literature on economics education and anti-social or morally suspect beliefs and behaviors, see Simon Niklas Hellmich, 2019, “Are people trained in economics ‘different,’ and if so, why? A literature review,” *The American Economist*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 246–268, and the same author’s “Social psychological aspects of ‘making’ economists: A review of the nature versus nurture debate,” 2020, *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 23–50. For a book-length treatment of these concerns, see Stephen Marglin, 2008, *The Dismal Science: How Thinking Like An Economist Undermines Community*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. For recent studies on economics education and sexism, see Valentina Paredes, M. Daniele Paserman, Francisco Pino, 2020, “Does economics make you sexist?,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 27070, and András Tilcsik, 2021, “Statistical discrimination and the rationalization of stereotypes,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 86., no. 1, pp. 93–122.

² On that mixed evidence, see Hellmich 2019 and 2020, *op cit*.

³ Notable exceptions include Tilcsik, 2021, *op cit*., which shows that subjects taught about so-called “statistical discrimination” are more likely to engage in discriminatory stereotyping when making hiring decisions.

Doing so obviously requires standards against which to judge the sociality or morality of beliefs or behaviors. To identify such content and standards, I would use two approaches. The first approach starts with standards and then tries to derive tightly linked economic content. The second approach starts with economic content and then tries to derive tightly linked moral standards.

To clarify those two approaches, my first approach will be informed by the moral standards explicitly stated in or implicitly suggested by the existing literature on this subject. Although the various measures of sociality and morality that previous studies have used are generally only loosely linked to the economic content that students were taught (as stated above), those measures reflect moral standards. For example, as part of one famous study, economics students were asked whether they would return a lost envelope that contained 100 dollars.⁴ The moral standard implicit in that question would seem to be that lost envelopes full of money should be returned. Such a standard could be defended from deontological, consequentialist, and perhaps other perspectives; it can also be taken as a moral standard arrived at through a descriptive ethics of sorts because the authors of that study apparently believed there was an important difference between keeping and returning a lost envelope full of money. Many other standards can be derived in the same manner from the existing literature. Such standards can also often be linked more tightly and less circuitously to economic content. To take the same example from above, the methods of neoclassical economics could be used to rationalize any choice anyone makes, including anything from returning the envelope with all of the money in it, to taking all or some of the money, to never bothering to pick up the envelope in the first place, depending on the expected costs and benefits associated with returning the envelope and taking money from it. Yet the way in which the economics of a lost envelope is taught could plausibly offer a moral legitimation or delegitimation of certain actions. An economic lesson could offer a rationalization and thereby a legitimation of taking enough money out of the envelope to compensate the individual for the time, energy, or other resources it takes them to return the envelope. An alternative economic lesson could argue that we would be “rational fools” (to use the phrase Amartya Sen uses in a similar context) if we could not trust each other to return lost envelopes without stealing their contents.⁵ An entire journal article could probably be written about the economics and ethics of returning lost letters, but again, I am interested in using the above-illustrated approach to identify a number of moral standards and then, from those standards, derive relevant economic content.

My second approach will also identify standards and content, but will use the latter to derive the former. In particular, I will identify morally salient content in introductory economics textbooks and then, from that content, derive relevant moral standards. The economics textbooks I will study are as follows. I will study four introductory economics textbooks that a recent study focused upon.⁶ The four books are: a pre-Keynesian textbook; Paul Samuelson’s classic text that is the prototype for modern mainstream economics textbooks; Greg Mankiw’s popular contemporary mainstream book; and the CORE Team’s *The Economy*, which purports to be an alternative to mainstream economics textbooks. I will also study open-access economics textbooks, including the mainstream OpenStax book, a more pluralistic textbook

⁴ The famous study I am referring to here is Robert Frank, Thomas Gilovich, and Dennis Regan, 1993, “Does studying economics inhibit cooperation?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 159–171.

⁵ Amartya K Sen, 1977, “Rational fools: A critique of the behavioral foundations of economic theory,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 317–344. Sen suggests a person would be a “rational fool” and “social moron” if, when asked by a stranger to mail an envelope, the person says “yes” because he/she is secretly “determined to open the envelope and check whether it contains something valuable” (Sen 1997, *op cit.*, pp. 332, 336).

⁶ The recent study I am referring to here is Samuel Bowles and Wendy Carlin, 2020, “What students learn in Economics 101: Time for a change,” *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 176–214.

that was based on extending that OpenStax book, and another somewhat pluralistic open-access textbook.⁷ I will also study four economics textbooks that are not free, but represent more pluralistic treatments of introductory economics.⁸ In addition to economics textbooks, I will also study textbooks from other social science disciplines.⁹ Those other social-science textbooks will provide a basis for comparison and contrast. I am especially interested in chapters of anthropology and sociology textbooks that deal with economic activity.

To identify morally salient content in those texts, I will use the qualitative, close reading methods familiar to all scholars, as well as quantitative, “distant reading” methods that have become popular in the digital humanities and other disciplines. My main distant reading approach will be a dictionary-based approach. I will use the “Moral Foundations Dictionary” (MFD), which is a set of key terms created by a group of social psychologists to identify and judge the moral content embedded in a text.¹⁰ The MFD has been used to study the moral content of a variety of texts, including religious sermons, social-media posts, speeches by politicians, statements by political parties, voting guides, and news articles. I will use the MFD to study the moral content of introductory economics textbooks. Obtaining copies of the above-mentioned textbooks was no small task, especially for the books that are not open access ones, but I have now obtained access to copies of them that are amenable to text analysis.

A discussion of the MFD and a strictly quantitative application of it to economics and other social-science textbooks could probably be a journal article by itself. I have engaged in preliminary research in this regard. My preliminary findings suggest that: most economics textbooks have roughly similar amounts of moral content; possible exceptions include that more mainstream textbooks have somewhat less moral content than most (but not all) more pluralistic economics textbooks; economics textbooks have significantly less moral content than most other social-science textbooks; and economics textbooks have significantly less moral content than economic-related chapters in anthropology and sociology textbooks. More pluralistic economics textbooks and other social-science textbooks may teach about economic activity in a more morally salient way, therefore.

Those quantitative approaches can be extended to identify the most morally salient passages. To give one example, one of the passages from the CORE book that is flagged as morally salient by these quantitative methods is a passage about the economic impact of racially motivated attacks on Black lives and businesses. A close reading of that passage can suggest what we would hope it would suggest, namely, that hate crimes such as racially motivated violence are abhorrent.

Yet not all passages that include MFD words contain moral content, and it is also possible that passages without any MFD words contain moral content, so close reading is necessary to identify such “false positives” and “false negatives” that are possible when using a dictionary-based approach. Close

⁷ The open-access textbooks I am referring to here are OpenStax’s *Principles of Economics*, Dean et al.’s *Principles of Economics: Scarcity and Social Provisioning*, and Daniel Saros’ *Principles of Political Economy: A Pluralist Approach to Economic Theory*.

⁸ The textbooks I am referring to here are Ha Joon Chang’s *Economics: The User’s Guide*, Geoffrey Schneider’s *The Evolution of Economic Ideas and Systems*, Irene Van Staveran’s *Economics After the Crisis: An Introduction to Economics from a Pluralist and Global Perspective*, and Jonathan Wight’s *Ethics in Economics: An Introduction to Moral Frameworks*.

⁹ The other social-science textbooks I am referring to here are OpenStax’s textbooks such as their sociology textbook. OpenStax does not currently have an anthropology book, so for that discipline I would use the open-access *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology, 2e* from the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges.

¹⁰ There is actually more than one MFD, but here I have in mind Frimer et al.’s widely-used “Moral Foundations Dictionary for Linguistic Analyses 2.0” (aka the MFD 2.0). Extensions to the MDF (such as Araque et al.’s “MoralStrength” lemmas) and other MFDs (such as Hopp et al.’s “extended MFD”) can also be employed in the same manner.

reading is also ultimately necessary to identify any moral standards that are explicit, implicit, or closely related to any given piece of economic content.

As is hopefully evident from the above-given discussion, this is a project that I have conceived of and engaged in preliminary research towards. It is an ambitious project, but also a doable one with an appropriate amount of dedicated time. Moreover, this project will lay the foundation for pedagogical changes and future research post-sabbatical.

In terms of pedagogical changes: I will not attempt to argue here that economics education should be a form of moral instruction that discourages anti-social and immoral behaviors and beliefs while promoting pro-social and moral ones. The merits and demerits of such a learning goal should be attended to as part of this project (rather than remaining as an implicit premise or unexamined assumption). That learning goal could admittedly be controversial. Yet even if someone rejects that goal (perhaps because it is seen as inappropriate to try to form the moral character of economics students or impossible to teach economics without deforming their moral character), it seems uncontroversial to say that developing critical thinking skills is and should be a goal of economics education, in particular, and higher education, in general. Considerations of whether economics education does or could promote immorality, amorality, sexism, racism, ableism, and so on can be part of developing students' critical thinking skills. Such considerations were the theme of my Spring 2021 offering of my department's senior project course, which was largely built around the question of whether economics education is morally debasing and whether it could be morally enlivening. That course was an opportunity for me to begin to explore the ideas that I am proposing to explore more deeply for my sabbatical. The results of the sabbatical would be incorporated into my introductory courses, upper-division courses, and perhaps a new upper-division course on economics and ethics. The results would be incorporated by centering the moral considerations that my sabbatical seeks to consider.

In terms of future research: Whether the pedagogical changes suggested above are actually pedagogical improvements is a question that I would eventually explore. One method to explore that would be to use my own courses and any courses of collegial colleagues. As I design or redesign lessons within my own courses, I would seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for studies that involve a within- and/or between-subjects design with a "control" lesson similar to traditional lessons and a "treatment" lesson that centers moral considerations. Another, similar method for exploration would be to use general population-based survey experiments.¹¹ Survey experiments can avoid the above-discussed small-sample and selection issues that arise when using convenience samples of students who have self-selected into certain majors and courses. I would design lessons short enough and accessible enough to be embedded within a survey without too much attrition and then seek IRB approval for surveys that randomly assign control and treatment lessons to survey respondents drawn from a general population. Their responses can be used to study the treatment effect of a given lesson without relying on convenience samples of students.

¹¹ On these, see, e.g., Diana Mutz, 2011, *Population-Based Survey Experiments*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

(c) Detailed procedures by which the objects are to be accomplished

Procedures by which the project is to be accomplished are detailed below. These detailed procedures also serve as a timeline of what would be accomplished within no more and no less than one semester.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Week</i>	<i>Procedures</i>
1	1	I will use the Hellmich 2019 and 2020 literature reviews cited above and the dozens of papers reviewed therein in order to collect studies (such as the lost envelope study discussed above) that are relevant to this project. Some studies have already been collected as part of the aforementioned Spring 2021 offering of my department's senior project course. This is the only point at which I might draw on a CSU resource, namely, my university library account.
“ ”	2	While continuing the collection of studies, I will identify the measures of sociality or morality used by each study (such as whether a person self-reports that they would return a lost envelope full of money) and take special note of any reasoning offered by the authors for the use of those measures. I will then itemize the measures by how commonly they are used across different studies. Some measures of sociality and morality have already been identified as part of the aforementioned senior project course.
“ ”	3	Starting with the most commonly used measures and ignoring measures that are uncommonly used unless they are exceptionally interesting, I will consider each measure. For each measure, I will identify at least two framings of economic content that could plausibly offer a moral legitimation or delegitimation of the relevant beliefs or behaviors (such as returning the lost envelope or stealing money from it, to use the same example discussed above). Some preliminary work in this regard (for the 12 items in the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen scale, in particular) has been done as part of the aforementioned senior project course.
“ ”	4	I will continue to develop and refine the framings of economic content, which will be the most challenging aspect of this first, qualitative approach. Relatedly, I will begin to develop lesson plans for my own courses as well as a small number of framings that are short enough and accessible enough to be well-suited for general population-based surveys. That work will be revisited at the end of my sabbatical in preparation for post-sabbatical pedagogical changes and further research, as noted below.
2	5	I will have dedicated writing time to draft article(s) based on the first, qualitative approach.
“ ”	6	“ ”
“ ”	7	While continuing to revise the draft of the article(s) on the first, qualitative approach as appropriate, I will pursue the second, quantitative approach discussed above. Preliminary procedures that have already been accomplished and that were discussed above include collecting copies of the aforementioned textbooks that are amenable to text analysis and using the MFD to perform preliminary analysis of the moral content of those books. I will revisit that preliminary work to ensure it is a strong foundation from which to move forward.

“ ”	8	Extending that preliminary research, I will use “distant reading” approaches to identify the most morally salient passages based on the prevalence of any MFD words. I will also identify each textbook’s most distinctive morally salient passages based on the prevalence of MFD words that are more prevalent in that textbook compared to other textbooks. I will then use close reading approaches to identify “false positives” among the passages. I will also try to identify any obvious examples of “false negatives” in all other passages that do not contain any of the MFD words.
3	9	Starting with the most morally salient and distinctive passages in each textbook and ignoring false positives, I will consider each passage in the textbook. For each passage, I will identify at least one moral standard that is explicit, implicit, or closely related to the passage (such as the above-given example of disapproval of racially motivated violence).
“ ”	10	I will continue to develop and refine the moral standards suggested by the textbook passages, which will be the most challenging aspect of this second, more quantitative approach. As those standards are identified, I will compare and contrast different economics textbooks with each other and against other social-science textbooks.
“ ”	11	I will have dedicated writing time to draft article(s) based on the second, quantitative approach.
“ ”	12	“ ”
4	13	I will finalize article(s) based on the first and second approaches for submission to peer-reviewed economics education journals
“ ”	14	“ ”
“ ”	15	I will submit article(s). I will then prepare for the above-discussed post-sabbatical pedagogical changes and future research that the sabbatical will have laid the foundation for. In particular, I will prepare lesson plans for the pedagogical changes and prepare IRB paperwork for research in my own courses and in general population-based survey experiments.
“ ”	16	“ ”

The proposed sabbatical would therefore divide its time in a roughly even manner between pursuing the first and second approaches discussed in Sec. 1.b.

(d) Demonstration that the proposed activity cannot be accomplished in less than the leave time, but can be completed in the time requested

As stated above in Sec. 1.b, this is an ambitious project, but also a doable one with an appropriate amount of dedicated time. The appropriate amount of time to accomplish the project is one semester based on the procedures detailed in Sec 1.c above.

(e) Any planned travel

This proposal does not involve any planned travel during the one semester of the sabbatical.

Section 2. Benefits to Myself as a Faculty Member

The following are explanations of how I as a faculty member would benefit from my proposed sabbatical.

(a) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to a greater command of subject matter

My proposed sabbatical would help me gain a greater command of a number of relevant subject matters. The above-described scholarly research project requires familiarizing myself with and drawing upon scholarship from a range of fields, including: computer science with its natural language processing; digital humanities with its quantitative approaches to studying text; social psychology for at least one operationalization of morality in Moral Foundations Theory; philosophy with its broader consideration of morality and ethics; other social sciences besides economics such as sociology and anthropology, including for the way in which their disciplines teach student to analyze topics relevant to my own discipline and, furthermore, for their theories of socialization and enculturation to a group that would in this case be “the Econ tribe”¹²; and select subfields within economics such as social economics and institutional economics, which argue that economics is inherently value-laden and reject the notion that economics could ever be value-free.

(b) Explanation of how this study will accomplish a shift in my areas of academic emphasis

My proposed sabbatical would help me shift my areas of emphasis within my own discipline of economics. I have a long-standing desire for both my research and my teaching to be historically grounded, rich, and pluralist (rather than ahistorical, reductionist, and monist). I am embarrassed for myself, but more importantly find it embarrassing for the contemporary economics profession, that I and many other economists can reach the stage I have reached in my career while knowing so little about so many things of supreme importance to a social science such as moral philosophy.

(c) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to improved organization of curricula

As discussed in Sec. 1.b (specifically, the “In terms of pedagogical changes: [...]” paragraph), the results of my sabbatical would lay the foundation for redesigning my introductory and upper-division courses and also perhaps designing a new upper-division course on economics and ethics. Those courses would be designed or redesigned by centering the moral standards and lessons that my sabbatical seeks to consider. My department is a collegial one, so any changes for the better in my existing introductory or upper-division courses would likely be shared with my colleagues who teach the same or similar courses. Whether a new course would indeed be added to our curricula would be a department-level decision, but I have offered a new special topics course in the past and others have offered special topics courses before, too, so my department would presumably be open to offering at least a special topics course on economics and ethics if there is enough anticipated demand.

¹² Here I am borrowing a famous phrase used to refer to the economics profession from Alex Leijonhufvud’s “Life among the Econ,” *Economic Inquiry*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1973, pp. 327–337.

(d) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to a command of advanced teaching methods

As discussed immediately above (in Sec. 1.c) and further above (again, in Sec. 1.b), the results of my sabbatical would lay the foundation for redesigning my introductory and upper-division courses and also perhaps designing a new upper-division course on economics and ethics.

Moreover, as suggested in Sec. 1.b above, my sabbatical would involve a deep consideration of, firstly, the extent to which economics education should be a form of moral instruction and, secondly, the ways in which centering morally salient aspects of economic content can help advance and develop students' critical thinking skills.

Finally, as discussed in Sec. 1.b (specifically, the "In terms of future research: [...]" paragraph), my sabbatical would lay the foundation for exploring whether the pedagogical changes I would seek to develop are actually pedagogical improvements. Although I would of course strive for them to be pedagogical improvements, whether they are or not should ultimately be subjected to study.

(e) Explanation of how the proposed leave will lead to creative activities in my field

As stated in Sec. 1.a, the most immediate output of my sabbatical will be the submission of at least one peer-reviewed journal article. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the main output that my school values in terms of the research, scholarly, and creative activities of its faculty. Also, as discussed immediately above (in Sec. 1.d) and further above (again, in Sec. 1.b), my sabbatical would lay the foundation for further pedagogical research.

Section 3. Benefit to the University

The above-described benefits to myself as a faculty member will also redound to the benefit of my department, school, and university, as discussed below.

Benefit to my department

When any given faculty member of a department is successful at teaching, that is also a success for their department in terms of being able to attract, retain, and serve its own majors, as well as serve majors of other departments.

The success of any given faculty member of a department in teaching also opens up the possibility for other departmental colleagues to adopt or adapt the successful practices. As discussed above in Sec. 2.c, given that my department is a collegial one, any changes for the better in my existing introductory or upper-division courses would likely be shared with my colleagues who teach the same or similar courses. To the extent those changes are indeed for the better, and to the extent my colleagues adopt or adapt such changes, that would lead to a benefit to my department beyond changes in my own teaching.

As discussed in that same section, my sabbatical may also lay the foundation for designing a new upper-division course. Our majors have expressed a desire for a greater variety of upper-division courses, so to the extent that I and my department decide that I should offer a special topics course on ethics and economics or redesign a course that has not been offered in awhile, that would help enrich the variety of upper-division courses offered by my department.

My department prides itself not only on its teaching, but also its research. When any given faculty member of a department is successful at research, that is also a success for the department in terms of its research productivity. As noted in Sec. 2.e, peer-reviewed journal articles are the main output that my school values in terms of the research, scholarly, and creative activities of its faculty.

The collegiality of my department also opens up the possibility for collaborative research. As discussed at greater length in Sec. 1.b and again briefly in Sec 2.e, my sabbatical would lay the foundation for further research. The two directions for further research discussed above, which were studying convenience samples of students and running general population-based survey experiments, could—and likely would—involve working with colleagues post-sabbatical.

Benefit to my school

The success of an individual faculty member in terms of their teaching and/or research is a success for their school.

My school has also recently received new standards from its accrediting body and a new Dean. Amid those changes in direction and leadership, our school is rededicating itself to making a positive societal impact through its teaching and research, as well as rededicating itself to supporting student diversity through inclusive teaching and learning.

Although I do not believe that I or my colleagues *intend* to promote anti-social or other morally suspect beliefs and behaviors in our students, and although I believe that our department is probably better than other economics departments at *not* promoting such things, it is nevertheless the case that if the

accusations against economics education are true—if economics education does morally debase its students, even unintentionally or only slightly—then that moral debasement is almost by definition a *negative* societal impact. It would seem to be the *opposite* of an impact for the betterment of society.

Economics is also one of the majors, along with finance, computer science, and engineering, for which women and other historically minoritized groups are underrepresented and exceptionally so. That is true nationally and even true at our school to some extent. The reasons for underrepresentation at a national level are much-debated, but an argument in line with the perspective of this proposed sabbatical is that there are biases in the methods and topics of mainstream economics.¹³ If the methods of economics take for granted the existence of discriminatory beliefs and discount the consequences of those beliefs in terms of advantaging some and disadvantaging others, or if discrimination is simply ignored as a topic of interest to economists, then it would not be surprising if economics education tends to attract some, fail to attract or even repel others, and in doing so, tend to promote or at least not discourage sexism, racism, or other discriminatory beliefs or behaviors. The direction of one’s moral compass (so to speak) cannot and should not be equated with their gender, race/ethnicity, etc., but similar arguments about biased methods or topics could be made to explain differences between economics majors and others with respect to other measures of sociality or morality.

Designing and redesigning economics education to discourage or at least not promote selfishness, cynicism, callousness, sexism, racism, ableism and other anti-social or morally suspect beliefs and behaviors would therefore help my school advance its efforts to generate positive societal impacts and support diversity and inclusion.

Benefit to my university

The success of an individual faculty member in terms of their teaching and/or research is a success for any university such as Fresno State that values both teaching and research. The fact that Fresno State values both teaching and research (rather than only one or the other) also makes research on teaching especially valuable. Not all institutions would necessarily value research on teaching, but Fresno State is one of the institutions that does.

Our university’s diversity and inclusion efforts, which are similar to my school’s, would also be supported for the same reasons that my proposed sabbatical would support my school’s efforts in that regard.

¹³ See, e.g., Susan Feiner and Bruce Roberts, 1990, “Hidden by the Invisible Hand: Neoclassical economic theory and the textbook treatment of race and gender,” *Gender and Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 159–181.

Section 4. Previous Leaves

I have never been awarded a sabbatical or difference-in-pay leave, so there are no reports on past leaves to attach to this proposal.

This concludes my proposal. Thank you to any and all parties involved in the consideration of it.