**Econ 2505 Group Projects for Semester Research Project and/or Emerging/Honors Scholars Program**

These are suggested projects for group collaboration on data collection, place-based visits (primary research), secondary research for the semester research project.

These might also serve as proposals for student collaboration and participation in the Emerging/Honors Scholars Poster Presentation Program in November

1. **What are food deserts? Mapping the location of food deserts in a Brooklyn neighborhood.**

**How is the issue of food deserts an environmental issue as well as an economic one?**

**Reading**:

1. Kristian Larsen and Jason Gilliland, *A Farmers’ market in a food desert: Evaluating impacts on the price and Availability of healthy food,* Health &Place15 (2009)1158–1162 Elsevier
2. Renee E.Walker a,b,n, Christopher R.Keane a, JessicaG.Burke. *Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature,* Health & Place16(2010)876–884

3) Cynthia Gordon, MarniePurciel-Hill, NirupaR.Ghai, LeslieKaufman, ReginaGraham, and Gretchen Van Wye. *Measuring food deserts in New York City’s low-income neighborhoods,* Health & Place 17 (2011)696–700

* What are the characteristics of the communities in and around food deserts? Economic/median family income
* Health statistics (ex., rates of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, etc.?)
* How can the economic costs to the larger economy in terms of health care costs be measured?
* What is the median distance to sources of fresh fruit and vegetables?
* What are the needs in such communities? How can access to more healthy alternatives be achieved? Can City government have a role here in providing incentives to small businesses to locate in and provide access to healthy alternatives?
* Educational information and outreach on the health benefits of healthy choices
1. **What are the environmental and economic costs and benefits of renewable vs. fossil fuel based energy sources?**

**Reading:**

1. Union of Concerned Scientists, *Benefits of Renewable Energy Use*
2. Daniel Cusick. *Fossil Fuel Subsidies Cost $5 Trillion Annually and Worsen Pollution*

*The International Monetary Fund notes that subsides for burning fossil fuels enrich the wealthy and make air pollution worse,* Scientific American, May 19, 2015

1. Environment America, *Report: The High Cost of Fossil Fuels,* June 30, 2009
* Define a geographic area within which to focus this study (A city? Part of the city? State? U.S.?)
* Think about a methodology for measuring the costs and benefits of each source within a given geographic area.
* Review some studies that have already been done and use one of these as a model

**Economic costs of fossil fuel use:** Extraction, refining, producing and delivery costs to households/businesses

* **Environmental costs:** Greenhouse gasses (CO2, methane and other emissions); what are the measurable costs in environmental damage that are already well documented?
	+ Warming of oceans, severe weather patterns (heat, flooding) and habitat loss for many species of wildlife.
	+ Farmers, food output/crops; threat to the overall food supply (economic and environmental losses)
	+ Health effects and costs as a result of exposure

**Environmental costs/benefits of renewables:**

* Production and installation costs of wind sources; solar; geothermal and other sources
* Environmental costs? Small costs associated with solar production
* Cost savings over time to the homeowner, business? (there are examples to look at here)
1. **Economically and Environmentally sustainable housing in the densely populated city**

**Reading:**

1. ULI Community Catalyst Report, Number 7. *Environmentally Sustainable Affordable Housing*, Urban Land Institute, October 4–5, 2007
* **Economic sustainability:** Affordability; increasing supply to meet rapidly rising demand
* **Environmental sustainability:** How can both older and newer residential buildings be made ‘greener’?
	+ Gardens/plantings on rooftops to absorb extremes of heat and cold to reduce demand for cooling/heating
	+ Models for green residential buildings: what green features have they incorporated in their designs?
	+ Are there features that existing structures can adapt?
	+ Is conversion to renewable energy sources possible?
	+ What are the potential economic and environmental cost savings?
	+ How can such changes improve overall quality of life?