

Adam Ruins Everything, Except Economics

Jadrian Wooten and James Tierney¹

ABSTRACT

Adam Ruins Everything is a self-proclaimed “half-hour informational comedy show” that appears on truTV. The main goal of the show is to take topics and discuss how they are not as great as one might expect; for example, gift giving. In doing this, *Adam Ruins Everything* touches on many economics topics that are relevant to introductory-level courses. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the television show *Adam Ruins Everything* to aid instructors interested in adopting television clips into the classroom.

Introduction

Over the past decade, resources have been developed to make the economics classroom more engaging with research and tools developed around music, movies, television shows, and sports. The end goal of most projects is to increase students’ understanding and interest in the material. While these resources are available for implementation, faculty are not necessarily willing to abandon traditional lectures in favor of these new approaches (Goffe and Kauper 2014). Using data from an ASSA conference, researchers found that around two-thirds of faculty continue to deliver a standard lecture either because they felt it was the best method or because it was cost-effective. One fear of adapting new teaching methods was that the time spent preparing new delivery techniques could be best utilized elsewhere. By providing an episode-by-episode breakdown of the major economics topics covered, the resources outlined in this paper may alleviate some of the hesitation of devoting time to implementing additional media into the classroom.

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the television show *Adam Ruins Everything* to aid instructors interested in adopting television clips in the classroom. *Adam Ruins Everything* debuted in September 2015 on truTV as a self-proclaimed “half-hour informational comedy show” (Conover et al. 2016). The original concept for the show was based on a web series by host Adam Conover and CollegeHumor. While Adam is the main host of the show, each episode includes guest appearances by actual researchers, scientists, professors, and even economists.² Character actors on the show portray Adam’s friends, friends of friends, partners, and siblings.

The show has two overarching features that make it an interesting application for the economics classroom. Whether the goal is to introduce new topics or connect material across topics, *Adam Ruins Everything* serves as a bridge that brings “real life” economics into the classroom in short segments. First, each 22-minute episode is typically broken into three major segments that cover a commonly-held misconception that the host, Adam Conover, tries to debunk. Many of these segments are available on YouTube via the show’s original producer, CollegeHumor, or its current television host, truTV. Starting in 2018, *Adam Ruins Everything* has been picked up selectively by Netflix,³ while all episodes are available for purchase on Amazon, iTunes, and Google Play Store. An instructor would most likely use a segment, not the entire episode, to teach a lesson. The second benefit of using *Adam Ruins Everything* is the level of research that goes into an episode. While presented as an informational comedy show, the writers provide

¹ Jadrian Wooten: Department of Economics, The Pennsylvania University, 319 Kern Graduate Building, University Park, PA 16802, jjw27@psu.edu. James Tierney: Department of Economics, The Pennsylvania University, 315 Kern Graduate Building, University Park, PA 16802, jet26@psu.edu.

² Donald Shoup appears in episode 3: “Adam Ruins Cars” to discuss the economics of parking, Joel Waldfogel appears in episode 25: “Adam Ruins Christmas” to discuss the inefficiency of gift giving, Allison Schragger appears in episode 31: “Adam Ruins Art” to discuss art markets and auction houses, Penelope Prime appears in episode 37: “Adam Ruins the Economy” to discuss American manufacturing, and Teresa Ghilarducci appears in episode 42: “Adam Ruins the Future” to discuss retirement accounts.

³ <https://www.adamconover.net/adam-ruins-everything-on-netflix/>.

on-screen citations for various claims made in each episode, which are available on the show's website.⁴ Sources for each episode include a wide range of media including podcasts, government reports, peer-reviewed publications, magazine pieces, and news articles. Each episode also has citations for additional reading on topics that viewers may be interested in exploring. This allows instructors to show clips, but also follow-up by assigning additional reading.

We begin with a brief summary of the use of television shows in engaging students in the classroom, then provide background information on the show and discuss some of our favorite ways to implement media in the classroom. We then present four episodes from the show that detail a significant economic concept often taught in principles of economics courses along with a teaching tip.

Literature Review

At the turn of the millennium, Becker (2001) argued in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that the economics curriculum needed to be overhauled because it was not appealing to the modal undergraduate student. He cited drops in the number of undergraduate economics degrees awarded as proof of a lack of student interest in the subject. Following a round of criticism by a set of highly-respected economics educators (Hamilton 2003; McMillin 2003; Hoyt 2003; Siegfried and Sanderson 2003; Watts 2003), Becker (2004) provided additional feedback about tailoring the economics curriculum to what he feels should be taught. The bulk of criticism against Becker's initial commentary focused on how instructors could work to improve their teaching and questioned whether instructors should be concerned about whether their field was "sexy" or not. A resonating point came in Hoyt's (2003) analysis that the "chalk-and-talk" method prevails because economists infer the benefits of changing their styles do not outweigh the costs associated with investing in new teaching tools, which is a sentiment echoed by Goffe and Kauper (2014) a decade later. However, other disciplines in the STEM field have embraced active learning techniques to enhance their lectures (Sax et al. 1999) even as economics has continued to resist.

Since the debate during the early 2000s, publications in economics education have focused on utilizing technology in lesson planning to improve content retention and interest. Whether it's a one-minute paper (Stead 2005), personal response systems (Elliot 2003), or a variety of alternative teaching methods (Becker et al. 2006), economics educators have spent a considerable amount of time developing resources to enhance the profession. It is not possible to determine whether the increased focus on developing resources has been the cause or the result of faculty using more alternative teaching methods since the mid-1990s. The median time devoted by faculty to teaching with traditional lectures has not changed from 1995 to 2010, but the average time spent lecturing has decreased by 8 percentage points. The median time spent teaching with media (films, movie clips, or DVDs) increased from no time at all in 1995 to 6% of the time in 2010. While the use of alternative teaching methods has moved in favor of alternative methods, the production of resources by researchers has also greatly expanded over the same time period (Watts and Schaur 2011).

The practice of using television clips in the classroom has boomed over the past few years, with clips directed at specific television shows like *Modern Family* (Wooten et al. 2020), *The Simpsons* (Luccasen and Thomas 2010; Hall 2014), *Seinfeld* (Ghent et al. 2011), *The Big Bang Theory* (Tierney et al. 2016; Geerling et al. 2018), *The Colbert Report* (Randolph 2016), *The Office* (Kuester et al. 2014; Kuester and Mateer 2018), *Parks and Recreation* (Conaway and Clark 2015; Wooten and Staub 2019), *Shark Tank* (Patel et al. 2015), and *South Park* (Hoffer and Crowley 2015). While there is value in using segmented clips to introduce or reinforce a particular concept, some of the value of the analysis may be lost when students miss backstories. Also, with traditional TV shows or movies, the actual concept may not be discussed, making it more difficult for instructors to connect the clip with the concept. On the other hand, many of the *Adam Ruins Everything* clips we discuss in this paper use the exact terminology used in common economics textbook while still presenting the material in an entertaining fashion. For example, in the episode "Adam Ruins Malls" (Conover et al. 2016), which is outlined in more detail below, Adam and Emily explicitly discuss the market power that Luxottica holds in the market for glasses and sunglasses:

EMILY: "80% of glasses and sunglasses brands are controlled by a single company, Luxottica."

⁴ <http://www.trutv.com/shows/adam-ruins-everything/blog/adams-sources/index.html>

ADAM: “But that would give them a virtual monopoly over the entire industry.”

EMILY: “Bingo. And because they control the luxury brands and the cheap brands, they can charge whatever they want for either.”

EMILY: “Luxottica uses that power to drive up the prices for everybody, sometimes charging as much as twenty times what they cost to produce.”

While Emily’s statement is not entirely accurate since monopolists cannot charge whatever they want, this quote gives instructors an opportunity to pose the issue to their students and have them respond with the correct process for monopolists selecting the price. Later in the same segment, the character representing Luxottica’s CEO provides a more appropriate interpretation of monopoly pricing, quoting the actual CEO in that, “Everything is worth what people are ready to pay” (CBS News, 2014). This allows instructors to reference the process of monopolists selecting output based on marginal revenue and marginal cost, but using the demand curve to select the price since demand represents what people are willing and able to pay.

In addition, relatively few projects have taken full episodes and applied “big picture” topics or used entire shows to teach lessons. The most recent exception is Al-Bahrani and Patel’s (2015) examination of economics themes in ESPN’s popular 30-for-30 series of sports-centric documentaries. In *The Episodes, Concepts, and Clips* section of the paper we dive deeper into four particular episodes. Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix outline each episode on a segment level and list the key relevant economic concepts. Table 4 sorts the list of episodes based on concepts that an instructor may be interested in covering.

While the literature on active learning and the use of videos in the classroom is sparse in economics, it has been shown that active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics (Freeman et al. 2014). This comes as no surprise, as cognitive psychologists have formalized the concept of scaffolding, where you must build a structure of existing knowledge to hold more complex concepts (Van de Pol et al. 2010). We believe that the use of videos in the classroom that are already familiar to the students help in the scaffolding process and make the learning process more active than basic chalk and talk.

Pedagogical Approach

For shorter clips, like those found on show-specific websites or clip agglomerators (Mateer 2012; Wooten 2018), playing the clip in the middle of the class could serve to break monotony of a traditional lecture. Short clips could be used to segue between topics, move from theory to application, or preview an upcoming lesson. The authors routinely use shorter clips in a variety of ways to keep the use of clips from becoming repetitive. With *Adam Ruins Everything*, truTV has aided in the utilization of its shows by providing particular segments of each episode based on the topic covered in the clip. For example, in the episode “Adam Ruins Malls,” the segments cover the history of malls and outlet malls, the regulation of nutritional supplements, and the market for glasses. On YouTube, truTV provides these three segments as separate videos that instructors can assign instead of assigning the entire episode.

Using media in the classroom is truly dependent on the instructor’s comfort level, but does require some lead time regardless of familiarity with mode of instruction. Depending on the type of assessment, various lead times may be required of the instructor. Because the episodes contained here are comedy-based, it is important to establish the legitimacy of their analysis in an early section. This may be especially true for certain students (international students particularly) who are not familiar with satirical work. Before showing any clip, instructors must understand how the piece fits in their overall lesson and whether humor is an appropriate medium for discussing the topic at hand. Alderman and Popke (2002) used Michael Moore’s *TV Nation* to introduce humor and film into a geography classroom in an attempt to have students answer broader questions. This springboard approach allows instructors to open with a series of clips from a common source over a topic interesting to students and then segue into a more thoughtful analysis in the classroom.

A creative end-of-semester assessment could involve having students research and “ruin” a commonly held notion around a particular topic. Students could work alone or in teams to form a central theme to their segments and then present their results using similar sources from the videos. Integrating active learning components into the classroom can take many forms (Al-Bahrani et al. 2016), and having students research

topics they find interesting and match the style delivered in these clips could help build a type of summative assessment.

The Episodes, Concepts, and Clips

The following episodes contain a few of the authors' favorite segments for teaching principles-level courses. We include a description of the overall story in the episode to give the reader a background, the topics and concepts covered, and one tip on how this concept could be used to engage students. In total, we have identified concepts for each of the show's episodes through the third season. Each show's topics are covered in Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix.

Episode: "Adam Ruins Restaurants" (2015)

Veronica, Haylie, and Emily are eating at a nice restaurant, but before the bill is settled, Adam discusses the custom of tipping in the United States. He covers the history of tipping and wonders why the custom has persisted. The tipping portion of the episodes ends with the owner of California-based Brand 158 restaurant talking about its no-tipping policy. The second segment of the episode revolves around the decision of choosing an appropriate alcoholic beverage for dinner, specifically wine, and includes a discussion on the inability of 'wine experts' to tell the difference between certain wines. The last segment of the episode explores fish offerings at restaurants. Adam describes to the group the appropriate color of salmon, the mislabeling of fish, and the practice of renaming fish. The episode ends with Adam talking about the history of restaurants and how people can make their experience more enjoyable.

Concept: Wage Discrimination (4:25 - 4:55)

In the first segment of this episode, Adam covers the equity issue inherent in the United States' custom of tipping. One of the arguments in favor of tipping is that it serves as an incentive mechanism for improved performance, but Adam debunks that myth with the work of Lynn (2000), which showed that tipping was often random and great service was often rewarded with at most a 1% increase in the total tip amount. A follow-up issue presented is that tipping can lead to wage discrimination. Adam cites Brewster and Lynn (2014), which showed black servers were tipped less than their white co-workers regardless of the customer's race.

Teaching Tip: Pre- & Post-Clip Discussion

It is likely every student has encountered the experience of tipping. Most students have been in the role of deciding on how much to tip, but some students have worked as servers receiving tips. This personal experience should create an engaging discussion. When teaching about wage discrimination in the labor portion of a class, or when discussing unintended consequences, asking the question "Should tipping be illegal?" will certainly create discussion in the classroom. Once that discussion has finished, show this clip and reengage the students. After learning of the evidence presented in Brewster and Lynn (2014), and knowing wage discrimination is illegal, students should now be able to articulate why some believe tipping itself should also be considered illegal. The study, and concept, was also covered in a Freakonomics podcast (Lechtenberg 2013), which can be assigned as a post-class review of the material.

Concept: Overfishing and the Tragedy of the Commons (15:53 - 17:35)

Many students learn about the tragedy of the commons and overfishing in introductory microeconomics classes. This segment gives a real-life example of the negative consequences associated with overfishing. Adam explains how companies can legally decide to rename "trash fish" varieties in order to make them sound more appetizing. The reason this practice is so common is due to the tragedy of the commons and overfishing, concepts which are explicitly stated in the segment. Popular species of fish become depleted over time which forces restaurants to serve some fish that may not have previously been considered appetizing. As a final point, Adam's actual father, David Conover, a marine biologist at Stony Brook University, discusses the extent of overfishing by providing various statistics and ways viewers can help curb the overfishing problem.

Teaching Tip: Think-Pair-Share

Whether the clip is required as a pre-lecture assignment or is shown in class, a simple Think-Pair-Share

activity (Lyman 1987) can help make the concept stick with students. Students can be asked to name other examples of common resources they have seen victimized by the tragedy of the commons in their day-to-day lives. Responses will typically include examples like shared living spaces in their apartments or air pollution from cars on campus. Rao and DiCarlo (2010) note that peer instruction of this type that allows students to discuss what they're learning in relation to their past experiences helps students apply the material to their daily lives.

Episode: "Adam Ruins Malls" (2016)

Adam and Emily take a trip to their local mall to purchase some items for Emily's upcoming honeymoon, while Adam seeks a new pair of glasses. The first segment covers the history of malls and the marketing strategy of outlet malls; it focuses on how stores differentiate their own products by offering higher-priced items in their primary locations while selling a lower-quality version at their outlet stores. There is a short segment on the regulatory history of the supplements industry and how it differs from pharmaceutical regulation. The third segment of the episode has Emily explaining to Adam the breakdown of the eyeglasses and vision insurance industry.

Concept: Monopoly Power (13:45 - 18:30)

In the last segment of the episode, Adam learns about the monopoly power of Luxottica. Through vertical integration, Luxottica controls the majority of designs, manufacturing centers, distribution channels, and retail operations in the market. Luxottica also manages the second largest vision insurance company in the United States (Goodman 2014). Whether students are in the market for Oakleys or Ray-Bans, they are buying Luxottica glasses. If students expect to find competitive prices by shopping at LensCrafters instead of Sunglass Hut, they are still buying their glasses from a Luxottica-owned store. This market may be especially poignant for students who are in the market for prescription eyeglasses or designer sunglasses and would be more noticeable than traditional markets like De Beers' power in the diamond industry or OPEC's control over the oil industry, which are examples used in many principles texts.

Teaching Tip: Pre-Lecture Viewing

One way to prepare students for lecture is to require work before attending. We suggest using this segment as a pre-lecture assignment. In this segment, Adam explicitly states that Luxottica has a "virtual monopoly" in the industry and talks about how limited competition affects prices of products. By assigning this as a pre-lecture viewing, students will have been exposed to critical vocabulary before entering the classroom. Using a student response system (clicker) or through a learning management system, instructors can administer a short quiz to ensure students have watched the video before class.

Episode: "Adam Ruins the Economy" (2017)

Adam visits his friend Hank, a recently laid-off factory worker who is in the middle of filing taxes. In the first segment of the show, Adam explains the concept of the return-free filing system, where the government would complete a worker's tax return and then send the results to the worker. This system would allow workers to save time that is normally spent with tax forms or tax filing software. In the second segment, Adam and Hank discuss popular measures of the strength of an economy including the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the unemployment rate, and gross domestic product. The last segment of the episode discusses the history of manufacturing employment in the United States.

Concept: Rent Seeking (2:02 - 5:20)

In the opening segment, Adam presents the incentives of tax-filing software companies like TurboTax and H&R Block who lobby to ensure the tax return system is complicated enough that consumers will need to purchase software to complete their returns. While offering a free version for two-thirds of Americans, many more opt-in to the system because it makes filing a bit easier. Tax software companies lobby Congress to ensure a return-free filing system never becomes implemented for fear of losing market power.

Teaching Tip: Combine with a classroom game

Goeree and Holt (1999) argue that using classroom exercises alongside lecture and textbook reading has

the potential to increase interest about economic theory while simultaneously decreasing some of the skepticism around its application. The authors propose a simple classroom exercise which shows how rent seeking leads to inefficiencies. This clip can be used in conjunction with the Goeree and Holt (1999) in-class experiment to connect economic theory to real-life applications that students will encounter at some point if they had not already.

Concept: Unemployment (8:20 - 10:00)

In the second segment, Adam and Hank discuss what it takes to be officially classified as unemployed. While the show presents the unemployment rate (U-3) as a flawed number, it is careful to mention that the unemployment rate does not include many individuals that others might consider unemployed. For example, Hank drives for Uber a few nights per week, which disqualifies him from being classified as unemployed, but results in his actually being considered underemployed. Two other individuals in the episode are disqualified because they would be considered discouraged workers or because they earned just enough to be classified as employed.

Teaching Tip: Pre- & Post-Clip Clicker Question

Studies have shown the use of student response systems (clickers) enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Mula and Kavanagh 2009; Premuroso et al. 2011). These systems provide immediate feedback for both the students and the instructor. For this concept, we suggest conducting a pre- and post-clip clicker question to gauge student understanding of the requirements to be classified as unemployed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Before showing the clip or beginning a discussion on the topic, survey the students on whether they believe they are unemployed:

“According to the economic definition, are you considered officially unemployed?”

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Unsure

Record these percentages and show the clip from “Adam Ruins the Economy.” After the clip finishes, but before beginning the discussion, re-poll the class with the exact same question. Responses will likely shift toward a more accurate response and hopefully lead to a healthy discussion on who is officially considered unemployed. This clip is a useful starting point because many students consider themselves unemployed despite the fact that they are not actively searching for a job as full-time students.

Episode: “Adam Ruins the Future” (2017)

The episode starts with Adam struggling to evaluate his relationship with his girlfriend, Melinda. His struggle focusses on where their relationship is going and segues into a theme of “the future” for the entire episode. The first segment of the show covers food expiration dates from a public policy standpoint and how firms benefit from this state-driven regulation. The second segment of the show covers retirement accounts and a lack of American savings. The episode ends with Melinda trying to convince Adam that he cannot predict the future despite how many research papers he reads or how hard he tries to control his life. This episode can also be used as an introduction for a personal finance course or used to discuss the role of government in retirement savings plans.

Concept: Retirement Accounts and Savings (7:15 - 11:35)

In the second segment of the episode, Adam explains to Melinda about the riskiness associated with 401k retirement accounts. He explains how companies’ changing from pensions to 401k accounts, especially in the 1990s, were an attempt to provide workers an incentive to save their own money. This segment of the episode can be used in a principles of finance course as a primer on different types of retirement accounts. In the second segment, Adam covers the volatility of selecting stocks by focusing on the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s and then on the 2008 financial crisis. This segment ends with a discussion by labor economist Teresa Ghilarducci on how 401k accounts should not be the only method of retirement savings. This portion of the clip can be used to discuss diversification strategies and the importance of portfolio management.

Teaching Tip: End-of-Class Minute Paper

A “minute paper” is typically defined as a short in-class writing assignment in response to an instructor-prompted question. The goal of these papers is to have students reflect on the class’s material or provide instructors with some meaningful feedback. Given that the concepts of retirement accounts and investment strategies are foreign to many principles students, this section provides a unique opportunity to elicit student’s perception of the relevance to the topic. Questions could include:

- What idea(s) struck you as most relevant that you could or should put into practice today?
- For you, what questions still remain unanswered about today’s discussion?
- What was the most surprising and/or unexpected idea covered in today’s lecture?

These types of questions not only have students reflect on the material covered, but also provide valuable insight to the instructor regarding which concepts could be covered better in future lessons. This assessment can provide a meaningful sense of closure to the topics covered that day.

Conclusion

Instructors have slowly begun adopting various teaching methods in their classrooms in order to improve content retention and understanding. While it is important for instructors to feel comfortable with the material they have selected to present to their classes, connections to “real world” economics can have a lasting impact on students. The topics presented throughout *Adam Ruins Everything* provide a basis for analysis for students because of the familiarity of the examples, the commonality of the misconception, and the humor utilized in the show.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Title, Concepts, and a Description of the Economic Topics Covered for Season 1

Ep.	Title	Show Topics	Economic Topics
1	Adam Ruins Giving	Diamond rings Tom's shoes Canned-food drives	Marketing, advertising, intrinsic value, cartels, competition, supply and demand, charity, production costs, profit, efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, warm-glow effect, rationality
2	Adam Ruins Security	Airport security Tylenol Credit card fraud	Cost-benefit analysis, opportunity costs, marketing, advertising, unintended consequences, rationality
3	Adam Ruins Cars	Car dealerships Automobile industry Car ownership	Regulation, monopolies, anti-competition laws, tax revenue, rent seeking, marketing, advertising, negative externalities, induced (derived) demand, overconfidence, unintended consequences, personal finance, budgeting, price discrimination
4	Adam Ruins Forensic Science	Polygraph Eye witnesses Fingerprinting	Behavioral economics (false memory, attribution bias)
5	Adam Ruins Restaurants	Tipping Wine Fish	Labor economics, minimum wage, input costs, incentives, wage discrimination, advertising, acquisitions, overchoice, utility, overfishing, tragedy of the commons
6	Adam Ruins Hygiene	Mouthwash and Soap Flushable wipes Running water	Marketing, advertising, profit, public utilities, unintended consequences, negative externalities, growth, poverty
7	Adam Ruins Voting	The Electoral College Voting Gerrymandering	Cost-benefit analysis, corruption, political economy
8	Adam Ruins Work	The standard work week Internships Salaries	Labor economics, labor unions, profit, productivity, incentives, labor laws, unemployment insurance, wages, asymmetric information, wage discrimination
9	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	Summer vacation Cartoons Video Games	Growth, human capital, technological improvements, subsidies, barriers to entry, marketing, advertising
10	Adam Ruins Sex	Circumcision Herpes The hymen	Unintended consequences, opportunity costs, cost-benefit analysis
11	Adam Ruins Nutrition	Vitamins Breakfast Health Shows	Decreasing marginal returns, advertising, research design, decision making
12	Adam Ruins Death	Death Funerals End-of-life care	Shutdown decision, mark up, profit, mergers, negative externalities, cost-benefit analysis, acquisitions

Table 2: Title, Concepts, and a Description of the Economic Topics Covered for Season 2

Ep.	Title	Show Topics	Economic Topics
13	Adam Ruins Hollywood	Movie awards Movie ratings Reality shows	Signaling, advertising, prestige, winner's curse
14	Adam Ruins Football	NFL playoffs Hydration myths Concussions	Sample size, advertising, preferences, research ethics, unintended consequences, sports economics
15	Adam Ruins Weddings	Weddings Newlyweds Divorce	Capitalism, commercialization, complements, preferences, demand, price discrimination, correlation vs causation, principal-agent problem, specialization, trickle-down economics
16	Adam Ruins Malls	Evolution of malls Outlet malls Eyeglasses	Commercialization, regulation, price discrimination, unintended consequences, advertising, monopolies, vertical integration, product differentiation, predatory pricing, willingness to pay, substitutes
17	Adam Ruins Animals	Cats and dogs Poaching Trophy hunting	Club goods, standardization, incentives, unintended consequences, property rights, common resources, tragedy of the commons
18	Adam Ruins Immigration	Illegal immigration Immigration courts Deportation	Labor economics, immigration, allocative efficiency, migration
19	Adam Ruins Housing	Buying vs. renting Airbnb Houses for the homeless	Mobility costs, personal finance, principal-agent problem, diversification, portfolio strategy, Great Recession, opportunity costs, regulation, discrimination, price discrimination
20	Adam Ruins Drugs	Marijuana DARE Opioid epidemic	Correlation vs. causation, health, economics of crime, incentives, principal-agent problem, unintended consequences, product differentiation, preferences, supply and demand
21	Adam Ruins Prison	Private prisons Solitary confinement Recidivism	Economics of crime, rationality, profit, cost minimization, privatization, public services, principal-agent problem, incentives, unintended consequences
22	Adam Ruins the Wild West	Cowboys Women in the Wild West Air Conditioning	Mobility costs, black markets, compensating differentials, labor economics, entrepreneurship
23	Adam Ruins the Internet	Power of the internet Cable companies "Free" websites	Growth, technological improvements, productivity, monopolies, natural monopolies, barriers to entry, imperfect competition, collusion, government intervention, antitrust policy, opportunity costs, tradeoffs
24	Adam Ruins Justice	Coffee lawsuit Jury bias Public defenders	Discrimination, statistical discrimination, self-interest
25	Adam Ruins Christmas	Christmas Gift giving Santa Claus	Inefficiency, gift-giving, rationality, behavioral economics, willingness to pay, demand, consumer surplus, subjective value, surplus, inequality
26	Adam Ruins Going Green	Littering Electric cars Climate change	Preferences, unintended consequences, cost minimization, inputs, outputs, production, opportunity costs, input costs

Table 3: Title, Concepts, and a Description of the Economic Topics Covered for Season 3

Ep.	Title	Show Topics	Economic Topics
27	Adam Ruins Having a Baby	Pregnancy Breastfeeding vs. formula Postpartum depression	Tradeoffs, opportunity costs, correlation vs. causation
28	Adam Ruins Weight Loss	Low-fat diets Calorie counting Weight-loss shows	Tradeoffs, opportunity costs, correlation vs. causation, health
29	Adam Ruins the Hospital	Healthcare costs Misuse of antibiotics Mammograms	Health, insurance, self-interest, correlation vs. causation, unintended consequences, monopolies, incentives, barriers to entry, false positives, statistics, framing, rent seeking
30	Adam Ruins Dating	Dating websites Alpha males Personality tests	Matching markets, correlation vs. causation
31	Adam Ruins Art	Classic art Famous artists Tax evasion	Preferences, self-reinforcement, spillover effect, price fixing, markets, supply and demand, subjective value, luxury goods, auctions
32	Adam Ruins What we Learned...	Christopher Columbus King Tut Grammar	Incentives
33	Adam Ruins College	Dropout billionaires Selecting a top college Student loan debt	Human capital, education, ability bias, signaling, survivor bias, labor force, labor economics, skilled labor, training, incentives, debt, government intervention, capital market imperfections
34	Emily Ruins Adam	IQ measurements Mistakes Adam has made Backfire effect	Rationality, bounded rationality, overconfidence
35	Adam Ruins His Vacation	Mount Rushmore Slot machines Hawaii	Behavioral economics, framing, hot hand fallacy, gambler's fallacy, loss aversion, labor vs. leisure
36	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	Lawns Suburbs School segregation	Opportunity costs, tradeoffs, negative externalities, spillover costs, moral hazard, inequality, discrimination
37	Adam Ruins the Economy	Filing taxes Economic indicators American manufacturing	Incentives, rent seeking, taxes, stock market, unemployment rate, GDP, comparative advantage, inputs, autarky, international trade, gains from trade, training, human capital, automation, labor economics, migration, unemployment types
38	Adam Ruins Conspiracy Theories	Fake moon landing 1980s Satanic Panic False theories	Normative vs. positive statements, bounded rationality, gambler's fallacy
39	Adam Ruins Spa Day	Detox treatments MSG Placebo effect	Correlation vs. causation
40	Adam Ruins Halloween	Poison candy War of the Worlds Mediums/Psychics	Substitutes
41	Adam Ruins Science	Lab rates Scarce funding Reproduction	Incentives, investments, principal-agent problem, unintended consequences, externalities, sample size, reproducibility, econometrics
42	Adam Ruins the Future	Food expiration dates Retirement accounts Unpredictability of future	Regulation, standardization, income, wealth, stock market, technological improvements, growth

Table 4: Concept Covered in *Adam Ruins Everything* and Corresponding Episodes

Concept	Title	Ep. #
Ability Bias	Adam Ruins College	33
Acquisitions	Adam Ruins Death	12
	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Advertising	Adam Ruins Cars	3
	Adam Ruins Football	14
	Adam Ruins Giving	1
	Adam Ruins Hollywood	13
	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
	Adam Ruins Malls	16
	Adam Ruins Nutrition	11
	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
	Adam Ruins Security	2
	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
Allocative Efficiency	Adam Ruins Immigration	18
Anti-Competition Laws	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Antitrust Policy	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
Asymmetric Information	Adam Ruins Work	8
Attribution Bias	Adam Ruins Forensic Science	4
Auctions	Adam Ruins Art	31
Autarky	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Automation	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
Barriers to Entry	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
Behavioral Economics	Adam Ruins Forensic Science	4
	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
Black Markets	Adam Ruins the Wild West	22
Bounded Rationality	Adam Ruins Conspiracy Theories	38
	Emily Ruins Adam	34
Budgeting	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Capital Market Imperfections	Adam Ruins College	33
Capitalism	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Cartels	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Charity	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Club Goods	Adam Ruins Animals	17
Collusion	Adam Ruins the Internet	23

Commercialization	Adam Ruins Malls	16
	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Common Resources	Adam Ruins Animals	17
Comparative Advantage	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Compensating Differentials	Adam Ruins the Wild West	22
Competition	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Complements	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Consumer Surplus	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
Correlation vs. Causation	Adam Ruins Dating	30
	Adam Ruins Having a Baby	27
	Adam Ruins Spa Day	39
	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Corruption	Adam Ruins Weight Loss	28
	Adam Ruins Voting	7
Cost Minimization	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
	Adam Ruins Prison	21
Cost-Benefit Analysis	Adam Ruins Death	12
	Adam Ruins Giving	1
	Adam Ruins Security	2
	Adam Ruins Sex	10
	Adam Ruins Voting	7
Debt	Adam Ruins College	33
Decision Making	Adam Ruins Nutrition	11
Decreasing Marginal Returns	Adam Ruins Nutrition	11
Demand	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Discrimination	Adam Ruins Housing	19
	Adam Ruins Housing	19
	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
Diversification	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Econometrics	Adam Ruins Science	41
Economics of Crime	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
	Adam Ruins Prison	21
Education	Adam Ruins College	33
Efficiency	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Entrepreneurship	Adam Ruins the Wild West	22
Externalities	Adam Ruins Hollywood	13

	Adam Ruins Science	41
False Positives	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
Framing	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
Gains from Trade	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Gambler's Fallacy	Adam Ruins Conspiracy Theories	38
	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
Gift-Giving	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
Government Intervention	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
Great Recession	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Growth	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
	Adam Ruins the Future	42
	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
Health	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
	Adam Ruins Weight Loss	28
Hot Hand Fallacy	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
Human Capital	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Immigration	Adam Ruins Immigration	18
Imperfect Competition	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
Incentives	Adam Ruins Animals	17
	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
	Adam Ruins Prison	21
	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
	Adam Ruins Science	41
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
	Adam Ruins What We Learned in School	32
Adam Ruins Work	8	
Income	Adam Ruins the Future	42
Induced (Derived) Demand	Adam Ruins Cars	3

Inefficiency	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
Inequality	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
Input Costs	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Inputs	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Insurance	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
International Trade	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Intrinsic Value	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Investments	Adam Ruins Science	41
	Adam Ruins the Wild West	22
	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins Immigration	18
	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Labor Economics	Adam Ruins Work	8
	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins Work	8
	Adam Ruins Work	8
	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
Labor Force	Adam Ruins College	33
Labor Laws	Adam Ruins Work	8
Labor Unions	Adam Ruins Work	8
Labor vs. Leisure	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
Loss Aversion	Adam Ruins His Vacation	35
Luxury Goods	Adam Ruins Art	31
Mark Up	Adam Ruins Death	12
	Adam Ruins Cars	3
	Adam Ruins Giving	1
	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
	Adam Ruins Security	2
Marketing	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
	Adam Ruins Art	31
	Adam Ruins Dating	30
	Adam Ruins Death	12
Markets	Adam Ruins Immigration	18
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Matching Markets	Adam Ruins Dating	30
Mergers	Adam Ruins Death	12
Migration	Adam Ruins Immigration	18
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
Minimum Wage	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Mobility Costs	Adam Ruins Housing	19
	Adam Ruins the Wild West	22
Monopolies	Adam Ruins Cars	3
	Adam Ruins Malls	16

	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
Moral Hazard	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
Natural Monopolies	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Negative Externalities	Adam Ruins Death	12
	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
Normative vs. Positive Statements	Adam Ruins Conspiracy Theories	38
	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
	Adam Ruins Having a Baby	27
	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Opportunity Costs	Adam Ruins Security	2
	Adam Ruins Sex	10
	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
	Adam Ruins Weight Loss	28
Outputs	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
Overchoice	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Overconfidence	Adam Ruins Cars	3
	Emily Ruins Adam	34
Overfishing	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Personal Finance	Adam Ruins Cars	3
	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Political Economy	Adam Ruins Voting	7
Portfolio Strategy	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Poverty	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
Predatory Pricing	Adam Ruins Malls	16
	Adam Ruins Art	31
	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
Preferences	Adam Ruins Football	14
	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Prestige	Adam Ruins Hollywood	13
	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Price Discrimination	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
	Adam Ruins Malls	16
	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Price Fixing	Adam Ruins Art	31

	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
	Adam Ruins Housing	19
Principal-Agent Problem	Adam Ruins Prison	21
	Adam Ruins Science	41
	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Privatization	Adam Ruins Prison	21
Product Differentiation	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
	Adam Ruins Malls	16
Production	Adam Ruins Going Green	26
Production Costs	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Productivity	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins Work	8
	Adam Ruins Death	12
	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Profit	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
	Adam Ruins Prison	21
	Adam Ruins Work	8
Property Rights	Adam Ruins Animals	17
Public Services	Adam Ruins Prison	21
Public Utilities	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6
	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Rationality	Adam Ruins Prison	21
	Adam Ruins Security	2
	Emily Ruins Adam	34
	Adam Ruins Cars	3
	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Regulation	Adam Ruins Housing	19
	Adam Ruins Malls	16
	Adam Ruins the Future	42
	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Rent Seeking	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
Reproducibility	Adam Ruins Science	41
Research Design	Adam Ruins Nutrition	11
Research Ethics	Adam Ruins Football	14
	Adam Ruins Football	14
Sample Size	Adam Ruins Science	41
Self-Interest	Adam Ruins Justice	24

	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
Self-Reinforcement	Adam Ruins Art	31
Shutdown Decision	Adam Ruins Death	12
Signaling	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins Hollywood	13
Skilled Labor	Adam Ruins College	33
Specialization	Adam Ruins Weddings	15
Spillover Costs	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
Spillover Effect	Adam Ruins Art	31
Sports Economics	Adam Ruins Football	14
Standardization	Adam Ruins Animals	17
	Adam Ruins the Future	42
Statistical Discrimination	Adam Ruins Justice	24
Statistics	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29
Stock Market	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
	Adam Ruins the Future	42
Subjective Value	Adam Ruins Art	31
	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
Subsidies	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
Substitutes	Adam Ruins Halloween	40
	Adam Ruins Malls	16
Supply and Demand	Adam Ruins Art	31
	Adam Ruins Drugs	20
	Adam Ruins Giving	1
Surplus	Adam Ruins Christmas	25
Survivor Bias	Adam Ruins College	33
Tax Revenue	Adam Ruins Cars	3
Taxes	Adam Ruins the Economy	37
	Adam Ruins Summer Fun	9
	Adam Ruins the Future	42
Technological Improvements	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins Having a Baby	27
Tradeoffs	Adam Ruins the Internet	23
	Adam Ruins the Suburbs	36
	Adam Ruins Weight Loss	28
Tragedy of the Commons	Adam Ruins Animals	17
	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Training	Adam Ruins College	33
	Adam Ruins the Economy	37

Trickle-Down Economics	Adam Ruins Weddings	15	
Unemployment Insurance	Adam Ruins Work	8	
Unemployment Rate	Adam Ruins the Economy	37	
Unemployment Types	Adam Ruins the Economy	37	
	Adam Ruins Animals	17	
	Adam Ruins Cars	3	
	Adam Ruins Drugs	20	
	Adam Ruins Football	14	
	Adam Ruins Going Green	26	
	Adam Ruins Hygiene	6	
	Adam Ruins Malls	16	
	Adam Ruins Prison	21	
	Adam Ruins Science	41	
	Adam Ruins Security	2	
Unintended Consequences	Adam Ruins Sex	10	
	Adam Ruins the Hospital	29	
	Utility	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
	Vertical Integration	Adam Ruins Malls	16
	Wage Discrimination	Adam Ruins Restaurants	5
Adam Ruins Work		8	
Wages	Adam Ruins Work	8	
Warm-Glow Effect	Adam Ruins Giving	1	
Wealth	Adam Ruins the Future	42	
Willingness to Pay	Adam Ruins Christmas	25	
	Adam Ruins Malls	16	
Winner's Curse	Adam Ruins Hollywood	13	