

University of Colorado Boulder
Department of Economics

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ECON 4309: Honors Seminar, Fall 2025
Syllabus and Schedule
Office Hours: TTh 1:30-3:00 PM
Econ 208D

Course Description

This is the first course in a two-course sequence designed to offer support and structure to students writing honors theses in Economics. In order to complete this course successfully and to be ready to continue work in the spring, students must write a research proposal. This proposal will consist of multiple parts:

1. Introduction
 - a. Clear statement of the specific research question
 - b. Motivation for the research question
 - c. Brief description of the methodology
 - d. Contribution of the study relative to the existing literature
2. Methodology (that will credibly answer stated research question)
 - a. Data source(s)
 - b. Sample and key variables
 - c. Regression equation(s)

Students who successfully complete this proposal by the end of the semester will be well-positioned to finish the thesis on time in the Spring. Some students will be able to complete the proposal-related work before the end of the semester, and they are encouraged to begin executing the proposal. For most thesis writers, the next steps are acquiring, formatting, and cleaning the data to be used in your analysis.

Prerequisites

Students must be admitted to the Economics Department honors program, which requires the permission of its current Honors Council representatives.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. The material to be mastered will be covered in lecture notes and in-class exercises, all of which will be available on the Canvas website.

Most students write an empirical thesis, and it is common to use STATA for data analysis. Students who wish to purchase their own copy of STATA qualify for a substantial discount through the University's [GradPlan](#). More information is available through a link posted on the Canvas website.

Requirements and Grading

Participation: Not just attendance but **focused participation** is a fundamental and mandatory expectation of all students in this course. If you must miss class due to extenuating circumstances, please let me know in advance.

Final Grade: The primary determinant of your grade in this course will be the quality of the proposal submitted at the end of the semester. Failure to conscientiously participate in seminar activities will, however, be reflected in a student's final course grade.

Honors Program Registration: To defend an honors thesis in Spring 2025, you must register your thesis by 11:59 PM on October 7, 2025 using the [College honors website](#). We will discuss completing your registration in class, but it will be your responsibility to fill out the form on time. **Note that Economics departmental policy requires only that you have secured a main advisor and an honors council representative (Prof. Cadena) prior to registering.** You will work with your main advisor and the honors council representatives to add the third committee member once your proposal is more fully developed, no later than January 31, 2026.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism: Some intermediate assignments and the final proposal require writing about other published work. You may not borrow text from the original papers without proper attribution. Plagiarism of any kind for any assignment in this class is grounds for removal from the honors program, in addition to grade sanctions for this course. The only acceptable use of AI in this course is as a copy editor. Prompts such as "check this document for grammar and spelling" are acceptable.

Tentative Schedule

	In Class	For Next Week
Week 1	Getting started	Read a previous successful thesis and fill out summary form. Make a slide with 3 potential research questions.
Week 2	Potential questions discussion Mini-lecture: advisors Mini-lecture: data	Set up and attend meetings with potential faculty advisors. Read a second previous thesis and fill out summary form.
Week 3	Discussion of previous theses	Continue faculty meetings, finalize advisor.
Week 4	Mini-lecture: literature search	Investigate data sources and fill out data form.
Week 5	Individual meetings on data	Complete Thesis Registration. List of papers for annotated bibliography.
Week 6	Mini-lecture: building a methodology	Work on annotated bibliography. Select paper for presentation. Fill out progress report on question/data.
Week 7	Mini-lecture: regression equations Individual meetings on question/data	Finish annotated bibliography. Prepare short paper presentation (5-7 min).
Week 8	Short paper presentations Mini-lecture: Outside committee member	Proposed methodology form
Week 9	Mini-lecture: Methodology slides Individual meetings on methodology	Methodology slides (email to advisor)
Week 10	Present methods slides Mini-lecture: written methods	Revise methodology slides Written methodology draft (email to advisor)
Week 11	Mini-lecture: introductions	Introduction slides Revise methods slides and written methodology
Week 12	Present intro slides Updates on methods slides Peer-edit methodologies	Written introduction
Week 13	Peer-edit introductions	Revise written intro+methods (email to advisor) Two names of potential outside committee members.

Week 14	Individual meetings on written intro+methods	Finalize proposal. Updated list of 8 papers (min) for references.
Finals Week	Proposal Due December 11, 7:00 PM (Final Exam slot)	

Additional Policies: This course is governed by additional policies that apply to all courses at CU Boulder. They are listed below for your reference, along with some specific information on how these policies will be applied in this course.

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. Understanding the course's syllabus is a vital part of adhering to the Honor Code.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: StudentConduct@colorado.edu. Students found responsible for violating the Honor Code will be assigned resolution outcomes from Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution and will be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit [Honor Code](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

Accommodation for Disabilities, Temporary Medical Conditions, and Medical Isolation

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or DSinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

If you have a temporary illness, injury or required medical isolation for which you require adjustment, please let me know as soon as possible how I can help. I do not need to know the specific nature of your disability in order to discuss accommodation.

Accommodation for Religious Obligations

Campus policy requires faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please communicate the need for a religious accommodation in a timely manner. In this class, let me know as soon as possible if you foresee a conflict, and I will accommodate your absence to the best of my ability. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information does not always align with how they identify. If you wish to have your preferred name (rather than your legal name) and/or your preferred pronouns appear on your instructors' class rosters and in Canvas, visit the [Registrar's website](#) for instructions on how to change your personal information in university systems.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, marital status, political affiliation, or political philosophy.

Additional classroom behavior information

- [Student Classroom and Course-Related Behavior Policy](#).
- [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).
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Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits [protected-class](#) discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email OIEC@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and [OIEC support resources](#) including confidential services can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and graduate instructors are required to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these concerns regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure the person impacted receives outreach from OIEC about resolution options and support resources. To learn more about reporting and support a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It page](#).

Mental Health and Wellness:

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#), located in C4C, or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7.

Acceptable Use of AI in This Class

As discussed above, you may not use AI to reword anything that has been written by someone else and turn it in as if it is your own work. Asking AI for help with grammar, spelling, and/or style is acceptable.