

University of Colorado Boulder
Department of Economics

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ECON 4309: Honors Seminar, Fall 2026
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 2027, you must register your thesis by 11:59 PM on September 28, 2026 using the [College honors website](#). We will discuss completing your registration in class, and I will provide the honors office with the necessary confirmation that you have departmental support to register. **In the end, it is your responsibility to fill out the form on time. If you fail to do so, you will not be able to defend a thesis in Spring 2027.** 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, 2027.

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.

Generative AI Use: The honors program imposes restrictions on the use of Generative AI in the honors thesis process. In general, the policy allows AI use in the research process – writing code, creating figures/tables, etc. – but it disallows using AI in the writing process. Note that giving a draft of your thesis to AI and asking it to suggest improvements is specifically prohibited. I will provide the full version of the college's AI policy on the Canvas website. It has more details and provides the authoritative version of the policy. If you are considering using AI to help with your thesis, you should consult the full written policy to make sure you are in compliance.

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 Read through example proposal together	Introduction slides Revise methods slides and written methodology
Week 12	Present intro slides;	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 10, 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

Instructional faculty members must make every reasonable effort to accommodate all students who have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignment deadlines or required attendance due to a religious observance. Whenever possible, students must notify the instructional faculty member at least two weeks in advance of the expected exam, assignment deadline, or attendance conflict to request an accommodation for religious observance. If the start date of the course is less than two weeks before the date of requested accommodation, students must notify the instructional faculty member on the start date of the course. See the [Student Academic Accommodations for Religious Observances Policy](#) for more information.

In this class, let me know as soon as possible if you need to miss class for a religious observance. I will gladly extend the deadline for assignments as needed in order to accommodate your absence.

Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information does not always align with how they identify. If you wish to have a name other than your legal name appear on your instructors' class rosters and in Canvas, or if you wish to choose pronouns to 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](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

CU Boulder is committed to fostering a productive 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- or off-campus. Denial of an approved accommodation for disability, religious observance, or pregnancy or pregnancy related medical conditions may be discriminatory.

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, [OIEC reporting options](#), and [OIEC support resources](#) including confidential services can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Faculty and graduate instructors are required to inform OIEC when someone discloses misconduct regardless of when or where it occurred. This is to ensure that those impacted receive outreach from OIEC about resolution options and support resources. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It page](#).

Mental Health and Wellness:

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to supporting students' mental health and overall wellbeing. If personal, academic, or emotional challenges are affecting your wellbeing or success, [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#), is here to help. CAPS offers counseling, referrals, psychiatric care, crisis support, and much more. Visit CAPS in the C4C, or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7.

Acceptable Use of AI in This Class

As discussed above, your final honors thesis is bound by the AI policy of the Arts and Sciences Honors Program. Because much of the work you produce for assignments in this class will end up incorporated in your honors thesis, you should follow that same policy when working on assignments for this class.