

University of Colorado Boulder
Department of Economics

Prof. Brian Cadena
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Website: Canvas
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Economics 4309
Honors Seminar, Fall 2019
Office Hours: T 1:00-3:00 PM
Economics 208D
Other times by appointment (just send an e-mail)

TA resource (shared with 4848):
Lauren Schechter
Lauren.Schechter@colorado.edu
Office Hours: M 1-3; T/Th 9:30-
11:00 AM; by appointment
Economics 401

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. Draft introduction – in the style common to academic articles in economics
 - a. Why is the topic interesting/important?
 - b. Clear statement of the specific research question
 - c. Verbal description of the methodology (with a placeholder for results to come)
 - d. Discussion of the contribution of the study relative to the existing literature
2. Data source description (empirical papers)
3. Proposed methodology, including a regression equation if empirical.
 - a. The proposed methodology must answer the specific question posed in the draft introduction.
 - b. If the thesis is empirical, the regression equation should be estimable using the data source identified

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 prior to the end of the semester, and they are encouraged to begin executing the proposal. The first additional practical step is often loading, formatting, and cleaning the data to be used in your analysis. Our TA is available to help with those steps. Beginning your data work prior to Winter Break will substantially reduce your thesis-related stress in the Spring semester.

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. I recommend Stata/IC. Prices are \$89 for a one-year license, and \$198 for a perpetual license.

Requirements and Grading

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. I will evaluate the proposals three criteria: how well they articulate a clear research question, how well they explain the expected contribution to the literature, and whether the proposed methodology (and data if applicable) are appropriate to answer the question. I view the other course assignments, including peer editing and participating in presentations as both presenter and audience member, primarily as inputs into the final document. I will, however, consider these inputs when assigning your final grade, especially if their quality is noticeably higher or lower than the final proposal's.

Honors Program Registration: To defend an honors thesis in Spring 2020, you must register your thesis by 3:00 PM on October 1, 2019. A link to the registration paperwork is available on the Canvas web page. We will discuss completing the paperwork in class, but it will be your responsibility to collect the required signatures and to turn in the form on time. **Note that Economics departmental policy requires only the signature of your main advisor and the honors council representative (Prof. Cadena).** You will work with your main advisor and the honors council representatives to add the third committee member during the spring semester prior to the defense.

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.

Tentative Schedule

	In-Class	For Next Week
Week 1	Getting started: questions and advisors	Write 3 potential questions; make the case why each is interesting; list potential advisors for each
Week 2	Workshop questions and advisors	Ask faculty members to advise you on a particular question.
Week 3	Additional follow-up on advisors and questions	Read a previous successful thesis and prepare a 2-page report (details during class)
Week 4	Discuss previous theses (bring reports); mini-lecture on data sources	Meet with advisor re: data. Write a 1-page description of a possible data source. Determine whether to revise question to match available data.
Week 5	Individual meetings – advisor, question, data	Meet with advisor re: related papers to read. Agree with advisor on one to present. Upload the paper. Complete Thesis Registration.
Week 6	Mini-lecture: reading and presenting research in Economics	Prepare presentation
Week 7	Paper presentations	Begin annotated bibliography work
Week 8	Paper presentations	Finish annotated bibliography
Week 9	Paper presentations	Meet with advisor re: methodology. If empirical thesis, prepare a document with the following: unit of observation, dependent variable, independent variable, key control variables.
Week 10	Mini-lecture: regression equations	Meet with advisor re: strengths and weaknesses of proposed method. Prepare methodology presentation, including strengths and weaknesses.
Week 11	Methodology presentations	
Week 12	Methodology presentations	
Week 13	Individual meetings – follow-up on methodology presentations	First draft of final document, <i>including methodology</i>
Week 14	Fall Break; No Class	
Week 15	Peer Edit final document (bring 3 copies)	Meet with advisor re: final document. Make edits to proposal.
Week 16	Turn in proposal; celebrate	

Other Course Information and Policies

Immigration status: the webpage www.colorado.edu/undocumented contains information regarding campus resources available for students and employees with DACA status. You should also feel free to discuss your status and any related issues with Prof. Cadena. I will do my best to provide appropriate accommodation or connect you to the most appropriate on-campus resources.

The **Office of Victim Assistance (OVA)** provides free and confidential information, consultation, support, advocacy and short term counseling services to University of Colorado Boulder students, graduate students, faculty and staff who have experienced a traumatic, disturbing or life disruptive event. OVA is not a part of the police department or the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance, and is confidential resource for students, staff and faculty. Their webpage is www.colorado.edu/ova and they can be reached by phone at 303.492.8855 and by e-mail at assist@colorado.edu

Other University Policies:

Disability Accommodation

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 or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail 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, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

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 policy may include: plagiarism, 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. All incidents of academic misconduct will

be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this course, please inform me no later than two weeks prior to any conflict you foresee, sooner if possible, so that we may find an alternative arrangement for you to complete the requirements of the course. See [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.