

University of Colorado Boulder
Department of Economics

Prof. Brian Cadena (he/him/his)

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Economics 4309

Honors Seminar, Fall 2021

Website: <https://canvas.colorado.edu/>

Office Hours: TTh 10:45-11:45 AM, T 2:00-3:00 PM

In-person: Econ 208D

Zoom: <https://cuboulder.zoom.us/my/briancadena>

Please use this link to schedule a specific time/place:

<https://calendly.com/brian-cadena/honors-office-hours>

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 theses)
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. For most thesis writers, the next steps are acquiring, formatting, and cleaning the data to be used in your analysis. 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/BE. The price is \$94 for a one-year license. You may also use R for your analysis, but many of the faculty advising you will be more familiar with STATA.

Requirements and Grading

Participation: Our class time will consist of in-person large-group meetings and individual meetings with Prof. Cadena. Attendance is required during weeks when we are meeting as a whole class. When we use multiple weeks for the same purpose (e.g. methodology presentations), you need to come only to the class meeting when you are presenting, but you must stay for all of the presentations for that week. In weeks when we are using the class time for individual meetings, I will ask you to sign up for a specific slot in advance. For individual meetings, you may choose whether you would like to meet in my office in person or over Zoom.

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 using 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 2023, you must register your thesis by 11:59 PM on October 4, 2022. A link to the online registration form is available on the Canvas web page. 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, 2023.

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.

Learning During a Global Pandemic:

The pandemic has affected and will continue to affect all of us in profound and unpredictable ways. This semester, I commit to offering empathy and flexibility to students enrolled in this class, and I ask that you offer me the same. I recognize that the world is still not fully "back to normal" and that things other than your coursework or your honors thesis may have become higher priorities than they would in the absence of the pandemic. At times during the semester, you may need to attend to your own health care or care for loved ones. I am more than willing to be flexible and to find ways to support you. Please be in touch with me if you are struggling and let me know how I can help.

Some of you may have children at home without consistent childcare; know that I will welcome them in class, regardless of the mode of instruction we are currently operating in. I also have two young children, and my spouse and I both work full-time. Although I am hopeful that the days of broad school closures are behind us, there is always a chance that I may need to cancel class or office hours at the last moment due to a lack of childcare.

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 (cohorts)	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 (cohorts)	Begin annotated bibliography work
Week 8	Paper presentations (cohorts)	Finish annotated bibliography
Week 9	Paper presentations (cohorts)	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 (cohorts)	
Week 12	Methodology presentations (cohorts)	Use annotated bibliography to write draft of literature review
Week 13	Individual meetings – follow-up on methodology presentations	First draft of final document, <i>including methodology</i>
Week 14	Peer Edit final document	Meet with advisor re: final document. Make edits to proposal.
Week 15	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 a 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:

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. 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. For more information, see the [classroom behavior](#) policy, the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

REQUIREMENTS FOR COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. CU Boulder currently requires COVID-19 vaccination and boosters for all faculty, staff and students. Students, faculty and staff must upload proof of vaccination and boosters or file for an exemption based on medical, ethical or moral grounds through the MyCUHealth portal.

The CU Boulder campus is currently mask-optional. However, if public health conditions change and masks are again required in classrooms, students who fail to adhere to masking requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. For more information, see the policy on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct. If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the "Accommodation for Disabilities" statement on this syllabus.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you will be absent due to quarantine or isolation, please let me know and we will collaborate to help you make up the missed work. In weeks when we are meeting individually rather than as a full class, I will offer a Zoom option to minimize disruptions due to missed class time.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

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.

PREFERRED STUDENT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to use your preferred name/pronouns, regardless of what appears in the class roster.

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, 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 Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

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 sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination and harassment, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these policies, and individuals who believe they have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of any issues related to these policies regardless of when or where they occurred to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and resolution options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

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 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. Because all of the assignments are inputs to the final proposal, you may have additional time to work on any assignment due on a date when you are observing a religious holiday.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.