

# **Economics of Crime and Corruption**

## **ECON 4929-001**

### **Instructor and Contact information**

*Instructor:* Dr. Daria Bottan

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Office: 04B Economics Building (basement of Econ Building next door to the male bathroom)

I'll give office hours in my office on Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 to 1:30 and on Wednesday 2:30-3:30. Feel free to stop by, ask questions, and just chat. If you would like to talk to me but your schedule does not allow you to come during office hours, email me and we will arrange a personal appointment.

I realize that coming to office hours may be uncomfortable and even a little scary. But once you do come to office hours, you'll probably realize it isn't as bad as you imagined. I also feel like going to office hours can be really useful: I can help you resolve a lot of questions and issues if we speak one on one. Do not hesitate to reach out no matter how small or large your issue is. I am here to help. I am available to you, your issues matter to me and office hours is the best way to discuss them (I prefer it to email).

### *Coffee Hour:*

I also realize that sometimes maybe you want to talk to me but it feels intimidating to come to office hours or approach me after class. Coffee Hour is my attempt to provide a space where we can speak in an informal and relaxing way. I'll sit on the bench in front of the economics building and drink a coffee every Tuesday from 9:30 to 10:30, you are welcome to join me. Feel free to stop by and introduce yourself, chat about Econ, career or whatever is on your mind. I look forward to meeting and getting to know you!

### **Description of the course**

This course will focus on economic models of crime and punishment, and on empirical evidence that evaluates the models. The first part of the course will introduce economic models of crime and study what factors motivate and deter criminal behavior. Then we will turn to empirical evidence and will discuss the role of higher fines, imprisonment, death penalty, abortion, drugs, guns and other factors in deterring crime. In the end of the course we will discuss corruption and whether it is harmful or beneficial to society.

### **Course goals**

In this class you will learn to apply theoretical economic analysis to understand criminal behavior. You will also learn methodology to interpret empirical evidence on crime - for example, understand whether evidence has a causal interpretation or not. These theoretical and methodological insights can be helpful in the analysis of other social phenomena.

### **Class format**

Each class I will present different topics and academic articles, we will discuss the topic together and you will practice answering different questions on the topic. Each student is expected to contribute to the discussion, ask and answer questions. Different thoughts, questions and opinions are valuable.

### **Grading**

Your grade will consist of:

25% Midterm Exam  
35% Final Exam  
20% Summaries (Readings)  
10% In class questions  
10% Term report

### **Grading Scale**

93% and above corresponds to A, 90-92% corresponds to A-; 87-89% corresponds to B+, 83-86% is B, 80-82% is B-; 77-79% corresponds to C+, 73-76% is C, 70-72 is C-; 67-69% corresponds to D+, 63-66% is D, 60-62 is D-; below 60 corresponds to F.

**There is no rounding.** This rule holds regardless of how close you are to a grade cutoff. For example, 89.99 is a B+ and will not be rounded to an A-.

### **Exams**

Exams will consist of free response questions. The questions will be based on readings assigned during the semester and on the material covered during lectures. During most of the classes some time will be devoted to practicing free response questions similar to those that will appear on the exam.

If you miss an exam without *documented excused absence*, the grade for that exam will be zero. In case of an excused absence for the midterm exam, the weight of the midterm will be shifted to the final (final exam will have a weight of 60%). It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor about the excused absence as soon as possible.

Midterm Exam will take place in class during class time on **October 6th**. The date of the final exam will be known later in the semester.

### **Readings**

I will regularly assign academic articles as readings. The readings will help you prepare for the discussion during class and get exposure to scholarly articles and various methods of data analysis. You will receive information on what reading is required and when it is due through canvas. It is your responsibility to check canvas for announcements and due dates regularly. You will be able to access the reading online, there is no need to purchase a book or access to articles. You will be required to write a short summary of each reading. The summary has to be submitted **before** class through Blackboard. I will

provide you with more information on how to submit summaries during the first and second week of class.

### ***Summary***

General Information: The summary should be printed in Times New Roman font size 12, single space, left and write margins equal to 1 inch. The summary should NOT be longer than 1 page.

Summary should include:

1. Basic information: your name, the title of the paper and the authors of the paper;
2. Research question: What is the paper about? What question are the authors trying to answer in this paper? Note: Do not copy it directly from the paper, summarize it with your own words as concise as possible.
3. Methodology: How do the authors answer the research question? Do they use a theoretical model or analyze real data (what data do they use)? What is the method they use?
4. Conclusion. What are the main results of this paper;
5. Opinion: Was there something you liked/found interesting in this paper? Was there something you didn't like about the paper?

Opinion part should not be more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the summary. Methodology and conclusions should be the largest part of the summary.

The due date for any reading cannot be extended for any reason. However you are allowed to miss one reading in a semester without any penalty to your grade (a “free” reading).

### ***In class questions***

During most classes we will do practice questions. These in class questions are designed to help you evaluate how well you understand the material, help you remember the content better and prepare you for the exams. Among other things we will do open ended questions, which will be similar to those on the exam.

The format of the questions in class will differ from class to class, however it will mainly include writing and submitting answers on paper (both individually and in small groups).

Missed in class questions cannot be made up for regardless of why they were missed. However you are allowed to miss two days of in class questions per a semester without any penalty to your grade (“free” in class questions).

I will not distribute those in-class questions back to you. So if you want to keep track of those: take a picture before submitting.

### ***Term report***

Term report can be written in group (up to 4 people) or alone. I think group is better but I understand that some of you prefer to work alone and am happy to accommodate. If you want to have a group but don't have one, I'll send an email with a form where you'll be able to sign up for a group and I will randomly match you with others who are also searching.

To write a term report you will pick a topic (or a question) in the economics of crime. For example, what are the effects of gun violence on student performance at school, are longer prison sentences helping to prevent crime, do crime rates increase when unemployment does, etc. Then you will describe how one could answer this question using data. You will provide data sources and detailed information about the empirical strategy. You don't have to actually perform the analysis but rather describe instructions of how someone could perform the analysis. Ideally you would come up with an empirical strategy that gets at causality, rather than just correlation (papers that just get at correlation will be graded out of 90 points rather than 100).

The report should be 2.5-4 pages long (Times New Roman 12 point font, single space, left and right margins equal to 1 inch).

More detailed rules about the term report will be specified later during the semester.

I understand that it is a difficult exercise. I expect you to ask me questions about it and ask me whether your empirical strategy is valid. I am here to help: you do not need to figure out everything alone. Questions are especially welcomed if they are asked in advance (at least 2-3 days before the due date) but last minute questions are ok too.

Term report will be due on **Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>**.

## **Course policies**

### ***Attendance***

Attendance does not enter your grade directly. However you cannot submit in class questions without coming to class. We will do these exercises almost every class, so if you miss class you lose points. During class we will practice free response questions similar to those on the exam. Missing class and these practice questions will make you less prepared for the exam. You are expected to come to class regularly.

### ***Extra credit***

I will occasionally provide extra credit exercises in class. Since those are bonus points there is no way to make them up if you missed them.

## **Course Webpages and Materials**

### ***Course Website***

Announcements for the class, information about readings and when they are due, lecture slides and final grades will be posted on canvas. *It is your responsibility to check the announcements regularly.*

### ***Materials***

There is no required textbook for this class. All the readings will be available online (some of the readings are only available using university internet), you do not need to purchase access to them.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto:contacttracing@colorado.edu)).

### **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](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu)

for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

If the only thing you require as an accommodation in this class is extended time on the exam you do not need to email me in advance. However, keep in mind that about 2 weeks before the first midterm exam I will send out a form to fill in for those who have approved extra time. It is very important that you fill in this form because otherwise you will NOT receive the extra time on the exam.

### **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. Most importantly feel free to email me any information you find important regarding this matter.

### **Honor Code**

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code academic integrity policy. 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 the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu)); 303-492-5550). Students 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 on the [Honor Code website](#).

### **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by or against 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 email [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about OIEC, university policies, [reporting options](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and reporting options.

### **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, please email me if you have any conflicts for religious reasons.

The class policies are subject to change due to unexpected external conditions and to ensure better student learning.