

**University of Colorado Boulder**  
**Department of Economics**

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Economics 4309  
Honors Seminar, Fall 2020  
Office Hours: T/Th 11:30-12:15, 2:00-2:45  
<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/my/briancadena>  
Please use this link to schedule a specific time:  
<https://calendly.com/brian-cadena/econ-4309-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 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. 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. The price is \$125 for a one-year 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 2021, you must register your thesis by 4:00 PM on October 6, 2020. 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 once your proposal is more fully developed, no later than January 31, 2021.

**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 you are adjusting to taking courses online or in a hybrid format 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 also recognize that you may have imperfect internet access or that you may be in a different time zone. 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.

I have two elementary-school-aged children who will be remote learning this semester, and my spouse and I both work full-time. While I will do my best to keep up normal response times to e-mail and to make myself available outside of regularly scheduled office hours and class meetings, I hope that you will extend some grace and patience to me this semester as well.

## Tentative Schedule

	<b>In-Class</b>	<b>For Next Week</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Getting started: questions and advisors	Write 3 potential questions; make the case why each is interesting; list potential advisors for each
<b>Week 2</b>	Workshop questions and advisors (cohorts)	Ask faculty members to advise you on a particular question.
<b>Week 3</b>	Additional follow-up on advisors and questions	Read a previous successful thesis and prepare a 2-page report (details during class)
<b>Week 4</b>	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.
<b>Week 5</b>	Individual meetings – advisor, question, data	Meet with advisor re: related papers to read. Agree with advisor on one to present. Upload the paper. <b>Complete Thesis Registration.</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	Mini-lecture: reading and presenting research in Economics	Prepare presentation
<b>Week 7</b>	Paper presentations (cohorts)	Begin annotated bibliography work
<b>Week 8</b>	Paper presentations (cohorts)	Finish annotated bibliography
<b>Week 9</b>	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.
<b>Week 10</b>	Mini-lecture: regression equations	Meet with advisor re: strengths and weaknesses of proposed method. Prepare methodology presentation, including strengths and weaknesses.
<b>Week 11</b>	Methodology presentations (cohorts)	
<b>Week 12</b>	Methodology presentations (cohorts)	
<b>Week 13</b>	Individual meetings – follow-up on methodology presentations	First draft of final document, <i>including methodology</i>
<b>Week 14</b>	Peer Edit final document	Meet with advisor re: final document. Make edits to proposal.
<b>Week 15</b>	Turn in proposal; celebrate	

## Other Course Information and Policies

**Immigration status:** the webpage [www.colorado.edu/undocumented](http://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](http://www.colorado.edu/ova) and they can be reached by phone at 303.492.8855 and by e-mail at [assist@colorado.edu](mailto: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 policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

#### Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](#).

Students who fail to adhere to these 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 policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](#) and [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](#). Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a [Daily Health Form](#). Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the [Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form](#) remotely. In this class, if you are sick or quarantined, let me know whether you will be able to continue to participate. If you are unable to participate in the class for a substantial period of time, I will meet with you to discuss alternatives.

### **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.

### **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 student's legal name appears on 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 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](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 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 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 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](mailto: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, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination,

harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

### **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 inform me no later than two weeks prior to any conflict you foresee, sooner if possible, so that we can find an alternative arrangement for you to complete the requirements of the course.

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