
University of Colorado Boulder
Department of Economics
Syllabus
Economics 4309-801

Instructor: Professor [Nicholas Flores](#)
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Location: Hellems 193
Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 3:30 – 6 p.m.
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., Wednesdays 10 – 11 a.m.

Recommended Books:

Economical Writing, Deidre McCloskey
The Elements of Style, William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White

Course Objectives:

This course is intended to steer you to conduct original research in economics. In particular, we need to get you working on your undergraduate honors thesis. You have a little over thirty weeks to finish your thesis for spring graduation. In order to write a respectable honors thesis without driving yourself over the edge, you must have a carefully conceived research question and a methodological approach to answer this question by semester's end. Our primary goal is to get you to this point. To this end, you will turn in a research proposal that will form the basis of your undergraduate honors thesis. You will also present your research proposal to the class. Since scholarship is a community endeavor, we will all strive to create an atmosphere of communication in the class that will allow you to help each other through the process. The final process is two-fold. First, you have to come up with a good research question and plan of action. Second, you have to communicate this question and plan to the class and convince us that what you are doing is worthwhile, e.g. original and interesting. Although I will assign you a grade in the course, your real test will be with the colleagues sitting next to you. If you can convince your colleagues of the merit of your project, you will succeed in writing a good thesis.

I have so far focused on the final goals of the class. Along the way we have to think about what exactly constitutes good (and bad) research in economics. There are many factors that determine whether a research project is a success. To name a few we have the basic research question, the scholarship behind the question, the

methodological approach, the limits of inference, and the effectiveness of communication. The class will consider all of these elements as well as others.

Course Components

(1) **Research Readings and Discussions-** We begin by reading and analyzing honors theses and papers from economics. In analyzing these papers, we will focus on the elements of research. For each paper we read, you will have to write up a brief summary of the paper. The summaries will be due on the day of discussion. In addition to getting you to focus on the elements of research, these exercises are intended to help you think critically about research.

(2) **Research Readings and Discussions, Your Field-** Following up on reading others' work, you will choose some papers in your area of research interest that will serve as the focus of our discussion and analysis. These papers can be either published or unpublished work. In order to sharpen your communication skills, you will be required to make class presentations at the beginning of the discussion session.

(3) **Research Proposal Development Exercises-** In order to ensure a continuous process through completion of your research proposal, you will complete three development exercises leading up to your final research proposal. Exercise 1 will require you to conduct a literature review for your area of interest. You will write a paper and make a class presentation of the literature review. Exercise 2 requires you to develop and then present an original research question. Again you will write a short paper and make a class presentation. In presenting your research question, you will need to focus on placing the research question in the context of the literature and defending the question itself. Exercise 3 requires you to identify the methodology that you will use for answering your research question. Again you will write a paper and make a presentation.

(4) **Research Proposal Presentation-** You will present your finished research proposal to the class and preferably to your advisor. The presentation will provide you final feedback from your colleagues and your advisor. In addition to delivering on the substance, you will want to focus on form. The final presentation is designed to serve as a warm up for your spring thesis defense.

(5) **Research Proposal-** It is no accident that the development exercises form the basic building blocks of your research proposal. At this point I expect you to deliver a highly polished written research proposal.

Evaluative Criteria: In order to earn a passing grade in the course, you must complete and turn in your research proposal by the last day of class. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. The course grade will be determined by (1) your written work, (2) your presentations, and (3) your participation in the course.

Evaluation of written work will be based on content, organization, and execution. Written work for the exercises will be due at the time of presentation with the exception of the final paper. Evaluation of presentations will be based on how well you communicate your work *in the allotted time*. It is imperative that students help one another through the research process. One observable way of helping is to provide constructive comments during presentations and discussions. All students will begin the semester with zero participation points. Points will be earned by providing helpful comments throughout the semester.

Evaluation

Briefs	5%
Discussion/Class Participation	5%
Exercise 1	10%
Exercise 2	10%
Exercise 3	10%
Research Proposal and Presentation	60%

Faculty/Student Consultation: For each research exercise, grades will be assigned the week following the last exercise presentation. Students will be kept abreast of their course progress through written communication and consultation with the professor.

Odds & Ends: While much of the course revolves around formal presentations, we need to strive to maintain a workshop atmosphere. There is enormous collective knowledge within our workshop group. In order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and suggestions, ample discussion time is built into the schedule. Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled classes.

Special Accommodations Policy

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office in Willard 322 (phone 303-492-8671).

Important Class Dates

August 24: First Day of This Class

November 22-26: Fall Break

December 7: Last Meeting Day for This Class

Disability and Medical Accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and
<http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>.

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at
<http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>.

University Honor Code

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council and those students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member involved and non-academic sanctions given by the Honor Code Council (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

Please refer to www.colorado.edu/honorcode to view the specific guidelines. If you have any questions related to this policy, please contact the Honor Code Council at honor@colorado.edu.