

# ECON 604 - Fall 2017

## Research Seminar in Economics

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Class: W 6:30-9:10 p.m.  
Class Website: [cavas.emich.edu](http://cavas.emich.edu)  
Office Hours: TWR 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
and by appointment

*“There is only one difference between a bad economist and a good one: the bad economist confines himself to the visible effect; the good economist takes into account both the effect that can be seen and those effects that must be foreseen.”*

*-Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850)*

### **Catalog Course Description:**

“Examines selected issues of research methodology, procedures and techniques. Students conduct individual research projects, present their findings in a seminar format and submit a research paper. Prerequisite: Econ514 Econometric Analysis.”

Note that ECON604 is considered a “capstone” course in which your graduate studies culminate in completion of a professional quality research project. For this reason, the course should be taken in or shortly before the last semester of your graduate program.

### **Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to create a collaborative forum that develops student’s expertise in research methodologies, procedures, and techniques needed to conduct original research on important behavioral and policy questions in economics. The primary assignments for this course include preparing a research proposal, reviewing prior research on a topic, formulating economic hypotheses to be tested in your research, collecting relevant data, empirically testing the hypotheses, communicating results orally and in writing, and professionally critiquing another economist’s research in writing. The course will include a limited amount of lecture on important research tools, but will focus more on a seminar format where you present your research through its various stages and solicit feedback and suggestions from your peers including me. In the end, each student should have completed a high quality, original economics research project which provides important findings to the economics profession and society as a whole. This is your final step in the EMU Master’s program at becoming an economist.

**Prerequisites:** ECON 514, or equivalent

### **Course Lectures & Reading Material**

The beginning of the course will be lecture heavy and closely follow Greenlaw’s textbook:

*Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research* (1st edition) by Steven A. Greenlaw.

This book provides an extensive overview of conducting economic research. I will post detailed lecture notes on Canvas prior to class.

I expect you to read the following two papers that are available online and on Canvas:

1. *A Guide to Writing in Economics*. by Dudenhefer, Paul, Duke University, December 2009.
2. *Writing Economics*. by Neugeboren, Robert, Harvard University, 2001.

Other good resources for writing an economics paper include the following:

1. *The Economist's Handbook: A Research and Writing Guide* (2nd edition) by Thomas Wyrick.
2. *Economical Writing* (2nd edition) by Deirdre McCloskey.
3. *The Elements of Style* (4th edition) by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White.
4. *A Guide for the Young Economist* (2nd edition) by William Thomson.

I have these books in my office if you want to borrow them just let me know.

Note: you will be reading many scholarly papers throughout the semester. Take note of the writing style, layout, sentence structure, tone, etc. of each paper. This will help you learn how to properly write in economics. You should be able to use these as examples of how you should write as we go through the steps of the research and writing process.

## **Empirical Research Project**

The goal of the empirical research project is for you to develop an understanding of how economists conduct applied empirical research. The project is intended for you to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of statistical software syntax (e.g. Stata, R, SAS, etc.), data management skills, and best coding and documentation practices for reproducibility;
2. Demonstrate the ability to place a research question in the context of existing scholarly discourse through an effective literature review;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the necessary components of a well-written empirical research paper and the economics discipline formatting and style conventions;
4. Be able to provide a critical and helpful assessment of other's work and;
5. Demonstrate the ability to present your research orally to a given audience.

Below includes a brief description of each component of the project:

### **1. Annotated Bibliography**

The annotated bibliography assignment is a precursor to the proposal. The purpose of this assignment is for you to familiarize yourself with the previous literature and start to place your research in context. You will begin by collecting a list of sources and then provide a summary, assessment and reflection of each paper.

## **2. Research Proposal**

For the research proposal you will explain your paper topic and motivate interest in the project with some of the key affects you will study. The goal of this assignment is to begin writing parts of what may become the introduction and motivation for your final paper.

## **3. Data Collection & Metaguide**

The Data Collection & Metaguide assignment entails the completion and submission of several data and replication documentation components, including: the original data, importable data, base data files, metadata guide and data processing command files. The purpose of this assignment is to easily replicate the data file used for the analysis.

## **4. The Literature Review**

The literature review includes at least five peer-reviewed sources that is intended to motivate your research question, place it in the context of previous work, and provide a foundation for your analysis. Much of your time will be spent analyzing each paper and how each paper fits together within the literature review that will ultimately lay the foundation for your research.

## **5. Data & Methods**

The Data & Methods phase of the project entails the completion and submission of five components, including: Data and Methods (i.e. the conceptual or theoretical framework, data and summary statistics, and model specification), Data construction command file, Analysis data file in the statistical software format, Data Appendix, Data summary command file.

## **6. Results & Conclusions**

This phase of the project entails the completion and submission of the results and discussion and your data analysis command file. The results and discussions will become the results and discussion section of your final paper. The analysis command file is the code that produces all empirical results presented in the Results section, using your data file that you built during data construction.

## **7. Research Compilation**

At this point in the semester, you will have completed several parts of the final research paper, as outlined above. You will compile each project into a final paper. This final phase of the empirical research project entails the submission of the 1) final empirical research paper and 2) a final clean set of replication documentation folders.

## **8. Discussant Comments**

For this assignment you will be paired with another person from class. You will read that person's paper and prepare a written draft that summarizes and provides feedback to the author.

## 9. Research Presentation

For this assignment you will give an oral presentation of your paper to the class. Presenters will be given 8-10 minutes to present their research using PowerPoint.

### Important Dates & Point Allocations

Due Date	Description*	Points	% of Grade
September 22	Annotated Bibliography	25	11%
October 6	Research Proposal	25	11%
October 20	Data Collection & Metadata Guide*	25	11%
October 27	Literature Review	25	11%
November 3	Data & Methods*	25	11%
November 17	Results & Discussion*	25	11%
December 4	Discussant Comments	10	5%
December 6	Research Presentation	10	5%
December 13	Final Research Paper	50	24%

\*denotes that data (.xlsx, .dta, etc.) files and/or command (.do, etc.) files are due at this stage also.

\*\*I will deduct 20% for each day an assignment is late.

### Grading

The grading scale for the course is as follows:

A.....93-100%	C+.....76-79%
A-.....90-92%	C.....73-75%
B+.....86-89%	C-.....70-72%
B.....83-85%	F.....0-69%
B-.....80-82%	

### Miscellaneous

I encourage students to participate in the **Graduate Research Conference (GRC)**. This gives students a chance to present their research to other interested students and faculty members. These skills help when applying for jobs and Ph.D. programs. For more information on the GRC follow this link: [http://www.emich.edu/graduate/news\\_events/research\\_conf/index.php](http://www.emich.edu/graduate/news_events/research_conf/index.php).

**The Graduate Deans Award for Research Excellence** is a \$250 cash award made in the fall and winter semesters to recognize excellence in ongoing or completed thesis research. Submit a completed Graduate Dean's Award for Research Excellence application form. For the application go to

[http://www.emich.edu/english/graduate/documents/grad\\_dean\\_award\\_app.pdf](http://www.emich.edu/english/graduate/documents/grad_dean_award_app.pdf)

**Graduate Student Research Support Fund** and **Conference Travel Fund For Graduate Students** are other potential opportunities to fund graduate research for such things as travel to conferences. For more information see

[https://www.emich.edu/graduate/financial\\_assistance/scholarships/travassist.php](https://www.emich.edu/graduate/financial_assistance/scholarships/travassist.php)

## **Lecture Topics**

1. What is Research?
2. Overview of the Research Process in Economics
3. Surveying the Literature on a Topic in Economics
4. Using Writing As a Tool for Economic Research
5. Writing As a Product of Economic Analysis
6. Critical Reading or How to Make Sense of Published Research
7. Theorizing or Conceptualizing the Research
8. Locating (and Collecting) Economic Data
9. Putting Together Your Data Set
10. A First Look at Empirical Testing: Creating a Valid Research Design
11. Introduction to Regression Analysis
12. Communicating the results of a Research Project

As time permits I plan to conduct a series of workshops on various aspects of conducting economic research including, literature searching, cleaning and processing data, working with statistical programs such as SAS, Stata, R, etc. I will announce these during class and post the relevant reading and lecture materials on Canvas.