

# ECON 604 - Fall 2021

## Research Seminar in Economics

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Class: Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 9:10 p.m.  
Class Website: <https://canvas.emich.edu/>  
Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

*“I hear, and I forget; I see, and I remember; I do, and I understand.”*

*-An old Chinese proverb*

### **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: ECON 514 Econometric Analysis.”

Note that ECON 604 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 the research process in the field of economics. 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.

These books are available in my office for you to borrow.

Note: Throughout the semester you will read several scholarly papers. While reading these papers take note of the structure of the paper, writing style, layout, sentence structure, tone, etc. This will help you learn how to properly write an economics research paper. I also take plagiarism very seriously. I reserve the right to utilize specialized software to check for evidence of plagiarism.

## **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*	% of Grade
September 17	Annotated Bibliography	2%
October 1	Research Proposal	2%
October 15	Data Collection & Metadata Guide*	2%
October 29	Literature Review	2%
November 12	Data & Methods*	2%
November 26	Results & Discussion*	2%
December 8	Research Presentation	8%
December 10	Discussant Comments	5%
December 17	Final Research Paper	75%

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

\*\*You do not receive credit for late assignments. Specific to the final paper, I will deduct 20% for each day the paper is late.

## Grading Scale

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%	

## Classroom Conduct

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. Views may differ on what counts as rudeness or courtesy. If you are not sure what constitutes good conduct in this classroom, ask the instructor. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

Students are expected to adhere to the standards and expectations detailed in the [Student Handbook](#). In addition, cell phones, side conversations, tardiness, foul language, and the use of open laptops and ipads/tablets for purposes other than for class will not be tolerated. These are very disruptive to students and if the problem persists I will ask you to leave. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity. If you are caught cheating I will give you a zero for that assignment/exam. If the problem persists I will take further action.

## University Policies

In addition to the articulated course specific policies and expectations, students are responsible for understanding all applicable University guidelines, policies, and procedures. For COVID-19 related safety measures and updates ([Click Here](#)). The [EMU Student Handbook](#) is the primary resource provided to students to ensure that they have access to all University policies, support resources, and

students' rights and responsibilities. Changes may be made to the EMU Student Handbook whenever necessary, and shall be effective immediately, and/or as of the date on which a policy is formally adopted, and/or on the date specified in the amendment. Please note: Electing not to access the link provided below does not absolve a student of responsibility.

For questions about any university policy, procedure, practice, or resource, please contact the Office of the Ombuds: 248 Student Center, (734) 487-0074, [emu.ombuds@emich.edu](mailto:emu.ombuds@emich.edu), or visit the website: <http://www.emich.edu/ombuds>

University course policies link: <http://www.emich.edu/studenthandbook/policies/academic.phpuniv>

## **Disability Concerns**

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may affect their learning in this class. If you believe you may have trouble participating or effectively demonstrating learning in this course, please meet with me (with or without an accommodation letter from the [Disability Resource Center](#)) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. During our discussion, I may suggest the possibility/necessity of your contacting the DRC (240 Student Center; (734) 487-2470; [swd.office@emich.edu](mailto:swd.office@emich.edu)) to talk about academic accommodations. You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about such issues, but it is best if we can talk at least one week prior to the need for any modifications.

## **University Writing Center**

The University Writing Center Virtual (UWCV) offers writing support to all undergraduate and graduate students. In doing so, we value the diversity of our campus and honor all students and the languages they bring with them to the university.

## **Holman Success Center**

The [Holman Success Center](#) provides Academic Support through a variety of virtual and in-person services.

## **University Library**

Research support is available to all students, 24/7. This includes getting started with research, identifying sources to search, developing search strategies, evaluating resources, and more. See <https://www.emich.edu/library/help/ask.php> for all of the ways in which you can get help with research. Some University Library services have changed, and may continue to change, in response to the pandemic.

Please check for current information at <https://www.emich.edu/library/news/covid.php>.

The Academic Projects Center (116 Halle Library) also offers one-to-one writing consulting for students, in addition to consulting on research and technology-related issues. Additional information about the APC can be found at <https://www.emich.edu/apc>.

## **International Student Resource Center**

**International Student Resource Center** (200 Alexander Building) is a service of the World Languages Department for EMU students who need help with their non-native English language for academic assignments. Help is provided for reading and comprehension, listening and note-taking, improvement of grammatical accuracy, compositions, study skills, and conversation. Note, this is not the Office of International Students.

## **Student and Exchange Visitor Statement (SEVIS)**

The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires F and J students to report numerous items to the **Office of International Students & Scholars (OISS)**

## **Title IX**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex under any education program or activity receiving federal financial aid. Sexual assault and sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX. **What you need to know about Title IX**

## **Graduate Research Conference (GRC)**

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).

## **Graduate School Scholarships**

The graduate school offers a number of opportunities to receive funding for graduate research. For more information follow this link:

<https://www.emich.edu/graduate/scholarships-aid/scholarships-fellowships/graduate-school-scholarships.php>.

This is a hybrid course that will meet face-to-face on Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. until 9:10 p.m. for the first half of the semester (until October 18th). During the face-to-face meetings I will lecture on the research process following the topics below. During the remaining part of the semester you will work independently on your research project and consult with me on a weekly basis.

### **Lecture Topics**

1. Introduction to Writing in the Discipline and Reproducible Methods
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 of Published Research
7. Theorizing or Conceptualizing the Research
8. Locating and Collecting Economic Data
9. Creating a Valid Research Design
10. Testing the Research Hypothesis
11. Putting it all Together
12. Communicating the Results of the 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.