

Sacramento State University
Department of Economics
Spring 2009

ECON 145: ECONOMIC RESEARCH METHODS

Professor:	Jessica Howell	Class Meetings:	Monday 5:30 – 8:20 pm
Office:	Tahoe 3013		AMD 217 / MRP 1011
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Catalog Description This course covers the basics of conducting applied economic research: the selection of topic, literature survey, choice of research method, formulation of hypothesis, testing of hypothesis using empirical analysis, and summary and conclusions. The course is designed to enhance students' ability to integrate economic theory, quantitative research skills, and research.

Prerequisites Courses: ECON 100A, ECON 100B, ECON 140; and both a passing score on the WPE as well as graduating senior status are required.

Course Objectives This course will give you the opportunity to apply your training in economic theory to applied economic research. We will explore current research topics in economics, develop the tools that economists use to explore those topics, and apply these tools to new research. You will learn the steps involved in conducting economic research. You will select a research question, formulate a hypothesis, apply an economic model, and collect and analyze data.

Course Goals

- To apply economic theory to real world situations and to utilize economic theory to frame analysis of research questions.
 - To recognize the vast array of information available to economists over the internet and in the library, and to learn where resources and data can be found.
 - To use statistical analysis to test economic theory and address policy issues.
 - To gain an appreciation for the value of economic reasoning and research, but to also recognize the limitations of its application.
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Course Textbook Greenlaw, S., *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economics Research*, Houghton Mifflin. (Required)

Studenmund, A.H., *Using Econometrics: A Practical Guide*, 5th Edition, Addison-Wesley. (Optional)

Grading Policy There are no exams in this course. Your course grade will be based on:

Class Participation / Attendance	10%
Oral and Written Assignments	60%
Final Paper	20%
Final Presentation	10%

Class Participation Attendance and participation are crucial for success in this class. I encourage you to participate in class discussions and ask questions when topics are unclear. You can only do these things if you are actually *in* class, so please attend and please come on time.

Assignments The assignments in this class are designed to clarify and solidify what is expected of you in completing your final project. I promise you that they are *not* designed to torture you or simply keep you feeling busy. If you choose not to complete the assignments on time, you run the risk of falling behind and never really catching up. This is not the type of class that you can put on the “back burner” while you cram for your other classes, so the assignments are designed to drastically reduce your ability to follow this tempting strategy.

Project Your work in this course will culminate with a final research project. Even though the finished project will involve you clearly and concisely conveying your findings in both written and oral presentations, **you will be required to demonstrate consistent progress** on this project over the course of the semester. “Consistent progress” will affect all aspects of your final course grade; such progress will enable you to be a better class participant, will be a large part of your homework grade, and will obviously influence the quality of your final paper and presentation.

Paper Your final paper must consist of the following sections:

- (I) An introduction that motivates your research topic/question
- (II) A review of the scholarly literature relevant to your topic/question
- (III) A description of your economic model and hypotheses to be tested
- (IV) A description of your data and sources
- (V) A presentation of your statistical results (using graphs, tables, etc...)
- (VI) A conclusion summarizing your findings, policy implications, and unresolved issues for future research

Presentation Your final oral presentation will be in front of your classmates as well as a group of economics faculty members. Formal presentations are scheduled for **Monday May 11th from 5:30 – 9:00 pm in the Folsom Suite** of the University Union, but you will each get several opportunities to present your ideas and progress to the class before these final presentations.

Additional Issues & Information

- For many students, the most stressful aspect of this course occurs in the beginning of the semester when you are trying to settle on a topic for your research project. The sooner you choose something, the sooner you can get to work, and the better you will feel. I plan to give you a list of potential research topics. Please feel free to choose one of these topics, to propose a similar topic to one on the list, or to choose something completely different that you just find interesting. Every student requires a different amount of guidance in this early stage of research and I want to try to serve all of you. The most important thing is that you each have a well-defined, feasible research topic before the end of February.
- Academic honesty is expected. All students must adhere to the University Student Code of Conduct outlined in the CSUS University Policy Manual. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism and/or the appropriate way to credit sources, review the university's guidelines on plagiarism at www.library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353 or ask me. Please do not make the mistake of assuming you are a good enough writer for plagiarism to go unnoticed.
- Late assignments are not accepted, in-class assignments cannot be made up, and no assignments are dropped.
- All assignments that are directly related to your final project will be handed in and stored in a **1/2-inch three-ring binder**. This is the easiest way for me to give you direct feedback on your progress and drafts of your paper, while allowing both of us to look back on those comments as the semester progresses. Here's the deal: you supply the binder and the work that goes in it, I'll supply the red pen and commentary. ☺
- Several of your assignments and aspects of your project will require the use of a computer and software programs (*i.e.*, Excel, Stata, EViews). We have access to a beautiful **computer lab in Mariposa 1011** all semester during our scheduled class time and I will sometimes find it easier to teach class in this computer lab. I will announce these computer lab sessions in class and via email ahead of time.
- The CSUS Library has a large number of resources for those of us doing research in economics. We even have our very own *Economics Librarian*, Bill Kristie. Bill has graciously agreed to share some insider tips on utilizing these resources with our class on **Monday February 2, 2009**. For this session, class will meet **in the library, room 2022** (go up the escalator to the 2nd floor and hang a left to the corner classroom).
- All course materials will be available on the course website, www.csus.edu/indiv/h/howellj (click on *Econ 145* in the *Teaching* section). I will maintain a **class schedule** on the website to keep us all on top of deadlines, handouts, and announcements. Please get in the habit of checking the website and your email.
- Because we only meet once per week, we will likely have to exchange information via email and I will occasionally also ask you to stop by my office to pick up drafts of your work with my feedback.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE			
			Greenlaw Chapter(s)
WEEK 1	Jan. 26	Introduction to economic research methods	CH 1
		Overview of the research process; Sample presentation	CH 2
WEEK 2	Feb. 2	Library Resources for Economists – Bill Kristie (LIB 2022)	Handout
		Finding a research topic by reading published research	CH 6
WEEK 3	Feb. 9	Conducting a literature review; Writing style and guidelines	CH 3, 4, 5
		<i>Assignment #1 Due – Reading Published Research</i>	CH 6
WEEK 4	Feb. 16	Economic Modeling	CH 7
		<i>Assignment #2 Due – Project Prospectus</i>	
WEEK 5	Feb. 23	Oral Presentation of Project Prospectus	
		Dataset construction and manipulation	CH 8, 9
WEEK 6	Mar. 2	<i>Assignment #3 Due – Literature Review</i>	
		Hypothesis testing; Regression analysis	CH 10, 11
WEEK 7	Mar. 9	<i>Assignment #4 Due – Regression Analysis Overview</i>	
		Regression analysis; Empirical methodologies	CH 10, 11
WEEK 8	Mar. 16	<i>Assignment #5 Due – Data, Model, & Methodology</i>	
		Empirical methodologies	CH 11
WEEK 9	Mar. 23	Lab Session	
WEEK 10	Mar. 30	SPRING BREAK	
WEEK 11	Apr. 6	<i>Assignment #6 Due – Preliminary Results</i>	
		Presenting data	CH 12
WEEK 12	Apr. 13	Lab Session	
WEEK 13	Apr. 20	<i>Assignment #7 Due – Draft of Entire Paper</i>	CH 4, 5, 12
		Lab Session	
WEEK 14	Apr. 27	<i>Assignment #8 Due – Presentation Slides</i>	CH 12
		Lab Session	
WEEK 15	May 4	Practice Presentations	
WEEK 16	May 11	FINAL PRESENTATIONS: FOLSOM SUITE, UNIVERSITY UNION	
	May 13	FINAL PAPERS DUE	