



**California State University, Sacramento**  
**Department of Economics**  
**Econ 145: Economic Research Methods**  
**Spring 2020**

**Instructor:** Min Min Thaw, Ph.D.  
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**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday 10:00 to 11:50 a.m.,  
or by appointment

**Class Time:** Monday and Wednesday 4:30-5:45 p.m.  
Mariposa Hall 1011

**Course Description:**

This course covers the basic steps and process of conducting applied economic research. This includes the selection of topic, literature review and survey, selection of research method and approach, formulation of hypothesis, testing of hypothesis using statistical analysis, summarizing results, conclusion and policy implications. This course is designed to enhance students' ability to integrate economic theory, quantitative research skills and research. You will organize and complete the research project in stages.

**Prerequisites:**

Econ 100A, Econ 100B, Econ 140 with a minimum "C" grade; and GWAR certification before Fall 09, WPJ score of 70+, or at least a C- in ENGL 109 M/W. You MUST be a graduating senior in economics.

**Learning Objectives:**

This course will offer you the opportunity to apply your training in economic theory to applied economic research. We will identify and explore current research topics in economics, develop the tools that economists use to conduct empirical research, and apply these tools for your research. You will learn the steps involved in conducting economic research. You will select your own research question, formulate hypotheses, apply economic analyses, and collect and analyze data. You will also learn the skills in writing and delivering presentation.

**Class Goals:**

- To critically evaluate economic and social issues using both theoretical and empirical tools you learned as an undergraduate student in economics.

- To select a research question, formulate a hypothesis, apply an economic model, and collect and analyze data using tools that you learned as a student in economics.
- To conduct statistical analysis in testing economic theory and offering policy implications based on your research findings.
- To acquire skills in thinking and analyzing the social and economic issues like an economist.
- To gain an appreciation for the value of economic reasoning and research, but also to recognize the limitations of its application.
- To learn to effectively communicate both verbally and in writing.

**Textbooks:**

These textbooks are very helpful, but they are not required for the class. In addition to the following two books, it is suggested that you review class materials from Econ 140 and 141.

Greenlaw, S., Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economics Research, Houghton Mifflin.

Koop, G., Analysis of Economic Data, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Wiley.

**Grading:**

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

1. Class Participation and Attendance (10%)
2. Oral and Written Assignments (50%)
3. Final Research Paper (30%)
4. Final Presentation (10%)

**Class Participation:** You are **required** to attend the class every week. Class participation consists of your attendance, practice of final presentation and feedback to your peers' presentations. I may also have in-class exercises at random times, and it will count towards your attendance records.

You are allowed TWO absences for the entire semester. Your semester grade will be discounted by 10% for every absence above two until it reaches 0. For example, your full semester grade is 90% and you missed 5 class meeting in total, then your actual grade will be 90% \* 70% =63%. It's a D.

You are **required** to schedule an appointment with me about your research project in the first two weeks of class during my office hours. If you are unable to make it during my office hours, you need to let me know so that we can make alternative arrangements.

### **Assignments:**

There will be seven assignments for the semester. Each assignment is designed to help you move forward on your project. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED.** The assignments are important parts of your final paper. Thus, missing assignments means that you will have to catch up with them later and complete them anyway although you won't be earning credits for them.

### **Final Paper:**

Your aim in this course is to produce a quality quantitative research paper by the end of the semester. This is your “project” for the course, and your finished project will be graded based on both written and oral presentations. Throughout the semester, you are required to demonstrate consistent progress on your project. If you fail to make consistent progress at any point of time in the semester, I reserve the right to dismiss you from the class. “Consistent progress” means completing the assignments on time with satisfactory level to move on to the next assignment.

Your final paper must consist of the following sections:

1. Title
2. Introduction (including factors that motivate your research question/topic)
3. Literature Review (a review of the scholarly literature review relevant to your topic)
4. Economic Model/Theory (and hypotheses that to be tested)
5. Description of Data (including data sources)
6. Empirical Results (presenting your statistical results, including tables, graphs and etc.,)
7. Conclusion (summarizing your research findings, policy implications and limitations of your research)
8. Bibliography

### **Final Presentation:**

Your final oral presentation will be in front of your classmates and a group of faculty members from economics department. Your performance will be evaluated by the faculty members. You will have 8 minutes to present your work, and Q&As will be followed. We will practice presentation skills before final presentations in class. You are required to use PowerPoint in your presentation, and presentation file is a part of your grade and you are required to send it to me prior to the presentation.

Your homework assignments such as literature review, data and methodology, research findings, policy implications and limitations of your research are parts of your paper and final presentation. Thus, it is imperative that you are up to speed with the assignments.

If you do not turn in either your final draft or your presentation, you will NOT be allowed to present your final project.

### **Additional Class Policies:**

1. Academic honesty is expected and required. You will earn a mark of zero on any work in which dishonesty occurs. Please make sure you read the University Policy on Academic Honesty:  
<http://www.csus.edu/umannual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.
2. There is also a useful student tutorial on this issue:  
<http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>  
**Please be mindful that plagiarism in any of the assignments will result in a failing grade for the class and you will be reported to Judicial Affairs.**
3. You are expected and required to come to class every week. If you miss a class, make sure to check with your fellow classmates to see what material you missed.
4. **Any student who has more than two homework assignments that received a zero grade will NOT PASS the class.\*\*\*\*\***
5. All assignments that are directly related to your final paper will be handed in and stored in a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch three-ring binder. This is the easiest way for me to give you direct feedback on your progress and drafts of your paper.
6. Your writing must be turned in both electronic formal and hard copy. I will provide you back on hard copy and/or track changes electronically. You are needed to keep the commented copies and maintain a portfolio in both formats. The hard copies should be kept in the binder, and dated and tracked changed versions of your drafts, data, and sources should be in an electronic folder, along with the PowerPoint presentations.
7. If you plan to drop the class after the drop deadline, you are responsible for completing the necessary paperwork. If you do not complete the course, you will receive a failing grade (F). Neither the "WU" grade, nor the "I" grade will be assigned under any circumstances.
8. If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lessen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours during the first week of the semester.

### **Additional Suggestions and Comments**

1. Academic writing is vastly different from regular English composition. Thus, it is suggested that you use (<http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>) for acquiring help with academic writing. Many undergraduate students have limited experience in academic writing, thus, you may need some feedback on academic writing. In

addition, it is suggested that you ask someone else to do proofreading. You need another pair of eyes to look at your drafts and final paper.

2. You will find that choosing a research **topic** is the most challenging part of this course. You may sometime discover that the data for proceeding with your research idea is limited. Thus, it is essential to check if there is the relevant and useful data to conduct empirical investigation. Therefore, you must start looking for a topic NOW!
3. Make sure that topic that you choose is a great interest for you while it is relatively easy to maintain the data given the time constraint that we have.
4. Once we have agreed on an interesting research topic, you will go ahead and find useful data, You will learn how to find relevant **data** in our library session (January 28<sup>th</sup>) as well as during lectures. If you are unable to find exactly what you need to conduct the regression analysis, then you may have to fine-tune your research question.
5. This is an economic class for students of economic major. Thus, your **topic** must include economic analysis and pertain to finance and/or economics. A project that purely explores statistical relationships will not be allowed (i.e. you are not allowed to do your final project on medical or sport fields).

## Course Outline

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
1: January 21	Syllabus Introduction and overview of Research Process	Chapter 1-2	
~2: January 27	Library tour with Bill Kristie (Library Room 136) (Jan 27 <sup>th</sup> ) Topic Selection	Chapter 6	<b>Description of Research Topic</b> due (January 29th)
3: February 3	Literature Review General Writing Guidelines and Writing style and guidelines	Chapter 3-6	
4: February 10	Conceptualizing the Research	Chapter 7	<b>Proposed Bibliography</b>

			(Reading published research)
5: February 17	<b>Oral Presentation of Project Prospectus</b>		<b>Project Prospectus</b>
6: February 24	Economic Modeling and Locating and collecting dataset	Chapter 8	<b>Review of Literature</b>
7: March 2	Regression and Hypothesis testing Data, Model and Empirical Methods	Chapter 9	
8: March 9	Empirical Methodologies/Testing	Chapter 10	<b>Data Set and Methodology</b>
9: March 16	<b>Regression Analysis</b>	No Class	<b>Regression and Completed Methodology</b>
10: March 23	Regression Analysis (continued)	Chapter 11	<b>Preliminary Results</b>
11: March 30	<b>Spring Break</b>		<b>No Class</b>
12: April 6	Communicating Results (Written)	Chapter 12	<b>Draft of Complete Regression Results</b>
13: April 13	Communicating Results (Oral)	Chapter 12	<b>Abstract and Conclusion</b>
14: April 20	Feedback on paper		<b>Draft of Entire Paper (First Draft)</b>
15: April 27	Practice Presentations		<b>Presentation Slides</b>

16: May 4	<b>Final Presentations</b>		
<b>17: May 11</b>			<b>Submission of Final Paper by 11:59 a.m. (electronic and paper)</b>