

ECON 496: SEMINAR IN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

SPRING 2023

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Course Information: Mondays/Wednesdays 12:00-1:15pm, Smith Decision Center

Textbook: None. Readings are working papers, published journal articles, and news as listed below.

Course Description: This course offers an “In-depth analysis of major events and trends in domestic and international economics,” with a, “focus on empirical techniques and the practical application of economics in a variety of settings.”¹

Course Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain current economic trends, both domestic and international (1,5)
2. Analyze the role of economics in business and policy decisions (1,5)
3. Apply economic rationale to the solution of practical problems (1,2)²

Translation: According to the dictionary, a seminar is a “class at a college or university in which a topic is discussed by a teacher and a small group of students.” You are that small group; I’m the teacher. The topic, in this case, is discrimination. We’re going to read a little bit of what some great economists had to say about discrimination, read a lot of papers that try to measure discrimination and understand the mechanisms behind it, and look first-hand at a little data on discrimination. In addition to our combined efforts to understand whether and why some people treat others differently based on apparently arbitrary external characteristics, you’ll pick your own topic to struggle with throughout the semester and produce the beginnings of a research paper on it.

Grades: The grades you earn will reflect the degree to which you have engaged the material—how well you understand the material and discuss it and your own investigation in class. Usually I use the +/- system for grades; I will likely do that unless you’re all bunched at multiples of 10%.

The class is comprised of three pieces: reading and discussing the papers in class, writing brief synopses of the assigned papers, and your research project. The weights I assign each method are below, followed by some thoughts on each:

Discussions	20%
One-pagers	50%
Literature Review	30%

¹ California State University Channel Islands Course Catalog

² Numbers in parentheses correspond to the following Economics Program Learning Goals: 1) Apply economic analysis to evaluate everyday decisions and policy proposals. 2) Propose viable solutions to practical problems in economics. 3) Use empirical evidence to support an economic argument. 4) Conduct statistical analyses of data, and interpret statistical results. 5) Communicate effectively in written, spoken and graphical form about economic issues.

Discussions. After the first week—where we establish that there are differences in income, wealth, and other economic outcomes across races and sexes—we’ll be talking about one or more recent economics papers each week. It’s your job to have read all of these before the first class of that week so we can talk about them. You should come to class knowing what the thesis of the paper is, how the author makes his or her argument, and how he or she rules out alternative arguments. Lacking that, you should come with questions about the parts that you don’t understand. **Gradually, my role will fade, and yours will grow, until you discuss the papers without me.** A last note on participating in class discussions: displays of chutzpah, panache, knowledge of current events, humor, and moxie always help you. Always.

One-pagers. Each **Thursday by the end of the night (11:59pm)**³, you owe me a one-page summary of the papers we are discussing that week. What was the paper (or papers) about, how did the author support his or her thesis, what did you learn, and for multiple papers, how did the papers relate to each other? One-pagers are to have 1-inch margins; single-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font; and your name and the paper or papers under discussion in the header. I expect continuous improvement and will distribute good one-pagers from previous weeks for you to see as I encounter them (yes, your work may be shared!). **I may also give you a quiz on Thursdays in lieu of a one-pager on weeks when there’s no one-pager on the reading. This is at my discretion. Be prepared.**

Literature Review. Pick a topic that interests you and survey the literature on that topic. If you’re a senior, this project can be related to or otherwise contribute to your capstone project but should stand alone. If you’re a junior, take this opportunity to explore a topic for capstone. I have broken the project down into three deliverables:

1. **Idea for a topic.** By the first deadline, have a sketch of two topics that might interest you. You should have read at least one paper on each topic. Write me one paragraph on each topic, referencing the paper that you read, and what you would like to learn from reading more papers on the topic. I’ll give you some quick feedback on this document, and let you know which idea is “better” (i.e., you’ll find more research to build a review out of, which is more interesting for a future capstone, and so on).
2. **Annotated bibliography.** By the second deadline, you should have found all of the papers that you think you will use to write your literature review. You should have at least ten journal articles in economics (or, in some cases, the social sciences in general). You will list these articles as in a bibliography using either APA or Chicago style formatting (I don’t care which; just be consistent!). Under each citation, you will write a paragraph describing the paper’s main question, the methods it employs to answer the question, and the paper’s findings. This serves as the material from which you will craft your review.
3. **Literature Review.** At the final exam date scheduled by the university, you will turn in your paper. You will each take 5-7 minutes to stand up in front of the class, describe the main question or questions in the literature you studied, and what the body of literature has to say about your paper. You will also field a question or two from the rest of the class.

³ If I don’t have the one-pager uploaded to Canvas by this moment, you should either be incapacitated or saving the lives of millions of registered voters. Understood?

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. If you're not in class, you're obviously not participating. Excuses are valid for health, university events, work, or the death of family. I may require additional confirmation for the death of family and for work.⁴

Grade appeals: If you believe that I'm being too harsh on your one-pager, you may submit a written appeal no later than 2 classes after I return it to you. I will respond in writing. If there is still a disagreement, we can meet during my office hours.

Attention check: An attention check is a question in a survey or experiment to see who is not really reading. This is my attention check. If, at the start of our first online class meeting, you privately message me that you read this text, and then say, "oh captain my captain!" out loud (even if you interrupt me), I will send you \$10 digitally or hand you the bill in person.

Office Hours: My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. Do come visit; I get lonely. Remember that I'll be reading these papers along with you each week, so I may need your help!

E-mail: Throughout the semester, I will send you email with course announcements to your CI email address. If you regularly use another address, please set up email forwarding. Please do send email to ask questions about course material; you can also come see me! On the other hand, please do not send email asking questions that are already addressed in the syllabus, posted on Canvas, or announced in class. Finally, be aware that the University has a spam filter that may screen out email sent from third-party email providers (e.g. yahoo, hotmail). It's best to send me email from your CI account to my CI account.

Canvas: I use Canvas to post everything. Please check Canvas at least daily.

Disability Accommodations: CSU Channel Islands is committed to equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The mission of Disability Accommodation Services is to assist students with disabilities to realize their academic and personal potential. Students with physical, learning, or other disabilities are encouraged to contact the Disability Accommodation Services office at (805) 437-8510 for personal assistance and accommodations.

Academic Honesty: Do not plagiarize! Plagiarizing includes taking long sections from a paper and changing them minimally without attribution. I can tell when this happens; very few of us (myself included) can faithfully take another's words and seamlessly work them into our own.

1. Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty. It usually involves an attempt by a student to show possession of a level of knowledge or skill that he/she does not possess.
2. Course instructors have the initial responsibility for detecting and dealing with academic dishonesty. Instructors who believe that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred are obligated to discuss the matter with the student(s) involved. Instructors should possess reasonable evidence of

⁴ In past years, I would make a joke here about people having lots of family die right around due dates. For the last two years, that's... sadly not at all unusual. Just stay safe and let me know if stuff happens, ok?

academic dishonesty. However, if circumstances prevent consultation with student(s), instructors may take whatever action (subject to student appeal) they deem appropriate.

3. Instructors who are convinced by the evidence that a student is guilty of academic dishonesty shall assign an appropriate academic penalty. If the instructors believe that the academic dishonesty reflects on the student's academic performance or the academic integrity in a course, the student's grade should be adversely affected. Suggested guidelines for appropriate actions are: an oral reprimand in cases where there is reasonable doubt that the student knew his/her action constituted academic dishonesty; a failing grade on the particular paper, project or examination where the act of dishonesty was unpremeditated, or where there were significant mitigating circumstances; a failing grade in the course where the dishonesty was premeditated or planned. The instructors will file incident reports with the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and for Student Affairs or their designees. These reports shall include a description of the alleged incident of academic dishonesty, any relevant documentation, and any recommendations for action that he/she deems appropriate.

4. The Vice President for Student Affairs shall maintain an Academic Dishonesty File of all cases of academic dishonesty with the appropriate documentation.

5. Student may appeal any actions taken on charges of academic dishonesty to the "Academic Appeals Board."

6. The Academic Appeals Board shall consist of faculty and at least one student.

7. Individuals may not participate as members of the Academic Appeals Board if they are participants in an appeal.

8. The decision of the Academic Appeals Board will be forwarded to the President of CSU Channel Islands, whose decision is final.

Course Outline: Our plan for the semester. Let's do this!

Week (Day)	Topic	Papers to Have Read	Assignments Due
1 (1/23)	Introduction	The syllabus	None. Come ready to play!
1 (1/25)	Data on the state of the U.S. & world	Playing with data!	Come with questions about things we should know
2 (1/30)	Leadership: what's going on with polarization?	Gethin et al. 2021.	
2 (2/01)			One-pager: Gethin et al.
3 (2/06)	More on international polarization...	Guriev et al. 2021	
3 (2/08)			One-pager: Guriev et al., plus Gethin et al. revised
4 (2/13)	Coronavirus and the economy	Maliszewska et al. 2021	
4 (2/15)			One-pager:, Maliszewska et al
5 (2/20)	The Economy (well, one economic policy...)	Autor et al. 2022	
5 (2/22)			One-pager: Autor et al.
6 (2/27)	Immigration!	Clark et al. 2015 Clements 2011	
6 (3/01)			One-pager: Clark et al.
7 (3/06)	Let's get started talking about race...	Christensen et al. 2021	
7 (3/08)			Project Deadline 1
8 (3/13)	More on race and discrimination...	Hurst et al. 2021	
8 (3/15)			One-pager: Hurst et al.
3/20-3/25	SPRING BREAK	Have fun, but work on your project, too!	
9 (3/27)	<i>Probably</i> discrimination...	Trounstine 2021	
9 (3/29)	Discuss your projects in class – these better be good!		Project Deadline 2
10 (4/3)	Wealth concentration	Fagereng et al. 2021	
10 (4/5)			Quiz? We shall see...
11 (4/10)	Does health insurance matter?	Brook et al. 1984	
11 (4/12)			One pager due: Brook et al.
12 (4/17)	I mean, really? <i>Really?</i> (Though ask me about Goldin et al. 2021!)	Baicker et al. 2013 Malani et al. 2021	
12 (4/19)			One-pager due: Malani et al.
13 (4/24)	We are so smart. S-M-R-T!	Lipsey et al. 2018 Garcia et al. 2021	
13 (4/26)			One-pager due: Pick one!
14 (5/1)	Guns & abortion (just for funsies)	Fischer et al. 2017 Hamlin 2021	
14 (5/3)			One-pager due: Fischer et al.
15 (5/8)	Of course, none of this matters if...	Warren et al. 2021	
15 (5/10)			
Final (5/15)	Teach Me Something! Reminder: 10:30am-12:30pm		Project Deadline 3