

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS
SYLLABUS
ECON 499 Capstone
SPRING 2011
PROF. PAUL RIVERA

Pre-requisites: Econ 310, 311, 488 and Senior Standing

Catalog Description: In-depth analysis of an economic issue utilizing the theoretical and empirical tools developed in the required major courses. Culminates with a senior paper and a formal presentation.

Course Learning Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- define an issue using economic concepts, tools and methods.
- analyze the issue using economic concepts, tools and methods.
- present analyses orally and in writing to their peers and to a larger audience.

Course Times: T/Th, 9:00-10:15am

Course Location: Bell Tower 1424

Course Text: None.

Course Readings: Available on Blackboard via eReserves.

Office Hours: T/TH, 8-8:45am; W, 9:30-11am; and *By Appointment*

Office Location: Sage Hall 2135

Contact: 805.437.8988 paul.rivera@csuci.edu

Course Grading Criteria

Final Project:	50%
Project Proposal:	10
Project Status Update:	10
Project Presentation:	10
Midterm Exam:	20

Project

Your project will be an in-depth research analysis of a topic of your own choosing. You will work in groups of 3 to complete the project. No, you may not create a larger group, so don't bother asking. You have until the end of the second week of classes to voluntarily form groups, and I will assign groups after, if anyone remains without a group.

While each project will be different, all projects will have certain elements in common:

- A clear statement of the issue, topic or question to be addressed
- A thorough and comprehensive review of the relevant background literature
- A model to formalize your theoretical perspective and relate it both to previous work and empirical evidence

- A relevant and useful set of data to test your model

Working in Groups

All members of a team will receive the identical scores for all graded elements of this course, with the exception of the midterm exam. Yes, that's 80% of the available points, so choose your partners wisely.

At any point **before Spring Break**, any member of the team may choose to dissolve the team and continue to work independently. This means that I will NOT mediate for you if you feel that your partners are not pulling their own weight, and you will bear the onus/responsibility for either motivating your team or dissolving the team. **After March 18**, if you are still part of a team, you must continue with that team until the end of the project.

Members of dissolved teams may independently continue to work on the same topic, each utilizing whatever work had been done by the team up to the point of dissolution. Alternatively, a member of a dissolved team may choose a different topic altogether, so long as a new Project Proposal is submitted within one week of the dissolution of the team. In these cases, note that the 10% allocated to the Project Status Update will be added to the Final Project.

Project Proposal

One of the most difficult aspects of putting together a project of this sort is selecting and narrowing your topic. Many students – including MA and PhD students – flounder for months fishing around for a topic. Not having that kind of time, your goal for the first few weeks of class is to find your topic and put together a proposal.

Your proposal should be no more than two typed, single spaced pages and must include:

- *Your topic*: This must be *specific*. It is not, for example, sufficient to say “The Military;” instead, it should be something more like “The Effect of Military Spending on Low Skill Labor.”
- *Motivation*: Why is your project interesting? Relevant? Useful? Timely?
- *Background*: Briefly, what have others said about the topic? What previous work has been done in this area?
- *Data*: What useful information is available for you to address your topic in a scientific way?

Project Status Update

This is a status check to ensure significant progress by the midpoint of the semester. Think of this Update as a substantially expanded version of the Proposal. There is no page limit.

Your Topic and Motivation should be clean and concise, essentially the Introduction to your paper.

Your Background research should be completed. This means that you should have, at this point, an annotated bibliography.

Your *Methodology* must be outlined and described. This includes at least a basic concept of any theoretical models, econometric models and the ways in which you plan to use them.

Project Presentation

This will be a formal presentation in a semi-public setting.

Lectures and Class Meetings

Lectures and class meetings will serve two purposes. First, this will ensure consistent progress on your project as I will devote substantial one-on-one time to helping you with your project. Second, I will also deliver several lectures on research methodology in economics, as well as several useful topics in econometrics that were probably not covered in Econ 488.

The *Midterm Exam* will be a written exercise in class to test your understanding of research methods and certain econometric topics.

Academic Honesty

All work that students submit as their own work must, in fact, be their own work. Verbatim language taken from other sources -- books, papers, web sites, people, etc. -- must be placed in quotation marks and the source identified. Similarly, work on tests and exams must be the student's own work, not copied or taken from other students' work.

In accordance with the CSU Channel Islands policy on academic dishonesty, students in this course who submit the work of others as their own (plagiarize), cheat on tests or examinations, help other students cheat or plagiarize, or commit other acts of academic dishonesty will receive appropriate academic penalties, up to and including failing the course.

Assignments or papers with plagiarized language or ideas will receive a failing grade. Plagiarism or cheating on quizzes or exams will also result in a failing grade. In cases where the cheating or plagiarism was premeditated or planned, students may receive an F for the course. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor on when and how to document sources if they have questions about what might constitute an act of plagiarism or cheating.

Key Dates

Group Formation:	Friday, February 4
Project Proposal:	Thursday, February 17
Midterm Exam:	Tuesday, March 15
Project Status Update:	Friday, March 18
Library Day:	Tuesday, April 26
Final Project:	Tuesday, May 17, noon
Presentation:	TBA