Department of Economics  
Carleton University  

ECON 3900 B – Research Methods in Economics  

2017 Fall: Meets Mondays, 6:05 – 8:55pm in 133 Paterson Hall  

Instructor Contact Information  
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Office hours: Monday, 1:30 – 3:00pm  

Prerequisites  
ECON 2030 with a grade of C+ or higher, ECON 2103 with a grade of C+ or higher, ECON 2210 (or equivalent) with a grade of C- or higher, and ECON 2220 (or equivalent) with a grade of C+ or higher. Students who believe they have taken a similar background course or courses from another university must provide appropriate documentation to the Department of Economics Undergraduate Administrator, Amanda Wright.  

Course Description  
The course will guide students through the process of writing up a research paper on the topic of their own choosing. Learning about doing research entails reading and critiquing research. Therefore, in the course of the semester, students will be exposed to number of studies from several (selected) areas of economic research that highlight good research practices. Students will improve their understanding of empirical methods and apply them in their own projects. Furthermore, students will learn how to formulate a research question, develop logically consistent arguments, search and summarize the existing literature, and gather data to evaluate the arguments.  

The course will have a strong focus on experimental methods. A well-designed experiment is arguably one of the most convincing empirical approaches to exploring causality relationship between variables of interest. Students will gain proficiency in designing and carrying out their own experiments.  

Useful Texts  
The books are highly recommended supplement to the course but they are not required. There will be assigned journal articles which will be posted on the cuLearn class website throughout the semester. Slides and notes that you take in class will be an important complement to the assigned readings.

All readings will be assigned on weekly basis and posted on the cuLearn.

**Examinations and Grading Policy**

- **Class Participation:** 10%

- **Research project:**
  - Proposal: 5% due on 2nd of October
  - First Draft: 10% due on 6th of November
  - Final draft: 30% due on 4th of December
  - In-class presentation: 15% 4th and 8th of December

- **Final examination:** 30% scheduled by the university

**Grading:** will be done on a 100-point scale. The final scores will be combined using the weights above and then translated into an alphabetical final grade in accordance with the percentage equivalents described in the Undergraduate Calendar. If necessary, exam grades or final course grades will be adjusted in a rank-preserving manner to fit the relevant departmental distributional norm. Without a legitimate reason, no graded paper, report, assignment or exam is reviewable after two weeks of being recorded on cuLearn.

No course grades are final until approved by the Faculty Dean. Application to write a deferred final examination must be made at the Registrar’s Office.

**Research Project:** Students will be divided into teams of 3 (or 4). The teams will work together on all aspects of the research project. The work will proceed in following steps:

1. Each team will propose two ideas for their project. I will assign one of the ideas to the team. If I do not like either one of the ideas, I will ask you to come up with a new proposal. Research ideas have to be original (i.e., there is no other research paper available that looks at the same question). Guidelines for proposing a research topic/idea will be discussed in class.

2. Each team will submit a 5-page draft of the project. At the midterm benchmark, it will be expected that the research question is clearly formulated, well-motivated and backed up with factual and anecdotal evidence. The research question should be also well-connected to the existing literature. I expect that that research team has a solid understanding of the current state of knowledge regarding their topic. The literature review section should be written up in a polished and coherent manner. The midterm
draft should also include a well-thought out plan for new data collection and include hypotheses to be tested.

3. The final draft should be a 10-15 page research paper (no less than 10 pages and no more than 15 pages). The length boundaries exclude the cover page, graphs, charts and figures, and references. The paper should be double spaced, use 12-point font, and have 1-inch margins. The paper will include the following sections:
   a. “Introduction and Motivation”
   b. “Literature Review”
   c. “Theoretical background”
   d. “Empirical Strategy”
   e. “Hypotheses”
   f. “Results”
   g. “Summary and Discussion”
   h. References should be in the correct format. (The details will be provided in class)

Further guidelines will be provided in class.

All research papers should be written in grammatically correct English, spell-checked and polished. Presentation and originality of the paper will account for 10 percentage points. In evaluating the paper, I will pay about equal attention to the following three criteria: the originality of the topic and motivation (including overall presentation and neatness); the demonstrated knowledge of the topic and connection to the existing literature; an application of methods and execution of the empirical strategy.

4. The last two classes of the semester will be devoted to in-class presentations of projects. Guidelines will be provided in class.

Class Participation: A portion of each class will be devoted to group work on the projects. Groups get together and will push their projects forward. I will circulate around the room and help the groups with various issues. Each group will document their discussion and write a summary of the progress of their work for that session. These work reports could be done in the form of several bullet points and should be no more than 1 page in length. The reports will be written on a sheet of paper and submitted to me at the end of each class. Only names of the students participating in the class discussion are allowed to be included on the reports. No late reports are accepted. For each submitted work report you will receive one point. The report may be graded. If it is graded, then the point you receive will be multiplied by your score (between 0% and 100%) divided by 100. Your participation score will be calculated as the number points earned during the course of the term divided by the number of total points possible.

Examination: There will be a final examination testing the knowledge of the material covered in the course.
Late or missed assignments: Students who can document a compelling reason for missing an assignment will be excused and granted an extension. Students must inform the instructor of such an absence in advance, if possible. For the absence to be excused an electronic confirmation of receiving a valid note by instructor will be required within 10 days of the absence. Without an approved excuse, a late assignment will be subject to a 10% penalty per day.

Re-marking: A request for remarking must be submitted in writing within 10 days of receiving the assignment back from me. The request should contain a detailed explanation of why you feel you should receive a higher mark. If granted, re-marking will apply to the entire work not just the contentious issue. As a result, the revised mark may be higher than, lower than or the same as the original mark.

Policies

Please be aware that plagiarism is serious offence at Carleton and should be recognized and avoided. For information on how to do so, please see “Pammett on Plagiarism and Paraphrasing” at www.carleton.ca/economics/courses/writing-preliminaries.

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

A grade of C+ or higher is required to qualify for ECON 4905. DEF(erred final grade) status at the end of this course precludes (continued) registration in any other course for which the former is a prerequisite.

Other University Policies

Please consult: Equity Services at www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation, the Paul Menton Centre at www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/accommodations, and the Undergraduate Calendar at calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/undergraduniversity/selectedsenatepolicies.

Readings and Academic Calendar

Tentative Outline of the Course:

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<th>Week 1: Introduction</th>
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<td>Week 2: Experiments</td>
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Week 3: Methods: Hypotheses testing
Week 4: Methods: Regression (research proposal due on the 2nd of October)
Week 5: Statutory holiday (October 9th)
Week 6: Methods: catch up + Topics*
Week 7: Fall break
Week 8: Topics*
Week 9: Topics* (first draft due on the 6th of November
Week 10: Topics*
Week 11: Topics*
Week 12: Presentations
Week 13: Presentations (final paper due on the 8th of December)

*Topics may include: status quo and endowment effect, online advertising, feedback and reputation systems, voting, matching, temptation and healthy choices, charitable giving, bounded rationality and strategic reasoning.