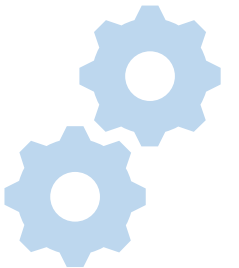


Time Spent on MA Economics

Raymond Chiasson

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Background and Summary

I tracked my working hours throughout my 8-month master’s program to better understand my study habits and the allocation of time across course components.

Main results

- I spent nearly 1,600 hours across math camp and the two terms.
- I spent on average 180 hours per course and approximately 7.3 hours per day.
- The time was allocated approximately 15% to lecture, 50% to assignments and 34% to review/studying.
- The term paper was the largest single component of any course, accounting for 30% of total time.

Program structure

- The program began in August with 3 weeks of math preparation (“math camp”) followed by two 16-week terms with four courses in each.
- The program included core courses in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics plus 5 electives.
- The set of electives that I chose were of low to moderate difficulty relative to those chosen by other students.

Definition of Hours Worked / Hours Studying

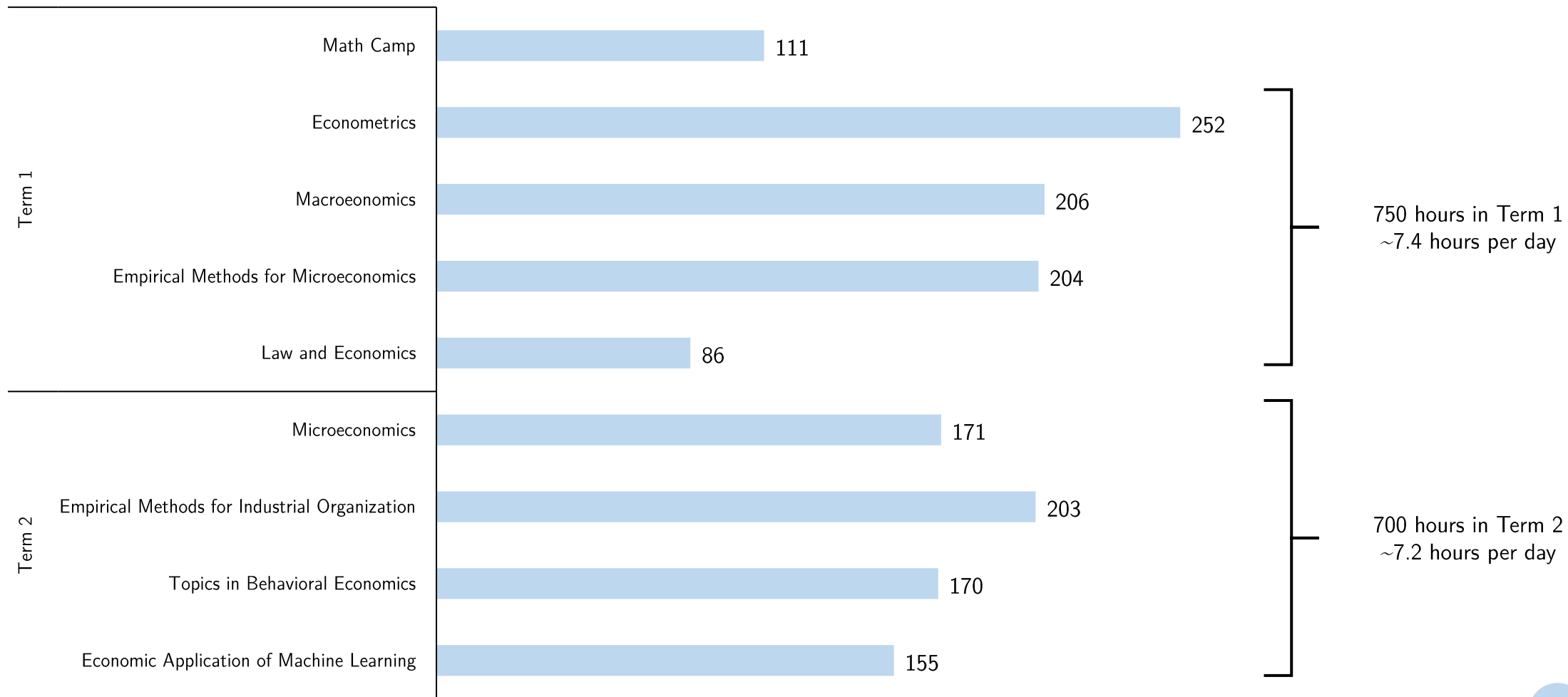
- I noticed early on that the amount of time spent trying to study was not equal to the amount of time that was actually spent studying.
- In 60 minutes of trying to study, I would only spend about 50 minutes on productive studying. The remainder was spent on email, social media, taking small breaks, or other distractions.
- I opted to record only my productive studying (not counting time spent on distractions).

Important Considerations

- This program was completed exclusively online during the covid-19 pandemic. I suspect that this led me to study more than I would have under normal circumstances.
- I was in an ideal position to dedicate nearly all my productive time to studying. I spent only approximately 0.5 hours per day on productive tasks not related to school (primarily working for a professor, networking, and PhD applications). I had no other significant time constraints such as caring for dependents or other employment, and I was fortunate enough to avoid being sick, injured or otherwise forced to take time off. I did not work as a teaching assistant which typically consumes 140 hours per term or 1.5 hours per day.
- I worked harder on assignments and term papers than was necessary to get top marks. I spent extra time on term papers due to personal interest and I completed most assignments without collaboration.

Program Dates			
Period	Start	End	Days
Math Camp	August 18	September 4	17
Term 1	September 10	December 22	103
Term 2	January 10	April 19	98

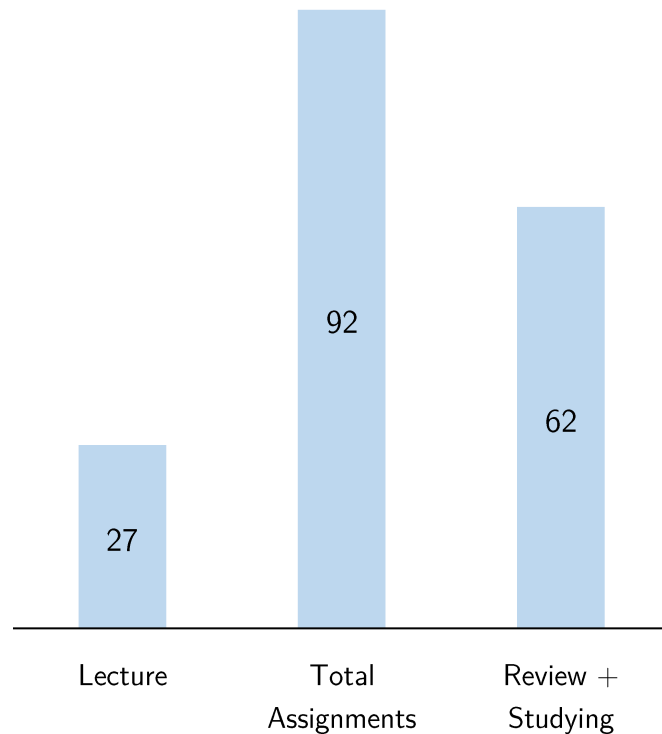
Total Time Spent by Course



Term 1: 103 days
Term 2: 98 days

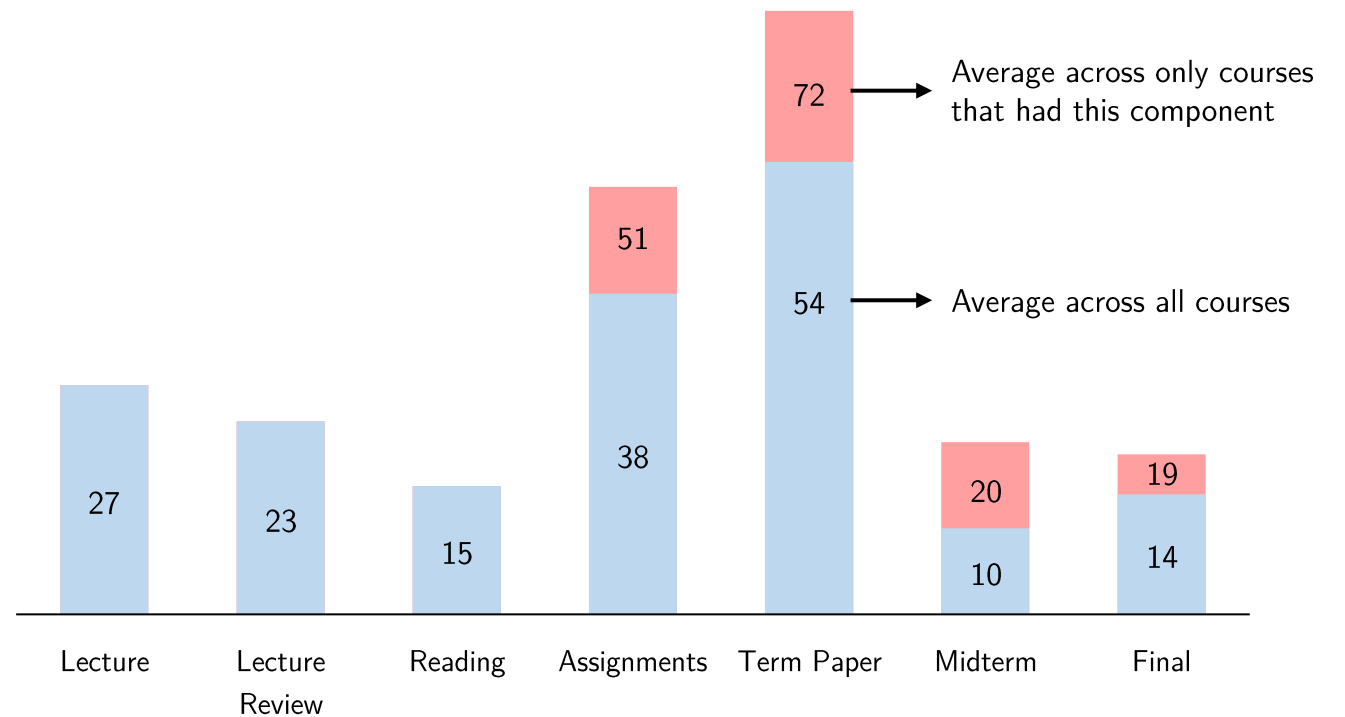
Breakdown of Course Time

Rough breakdown for average course



Average total course time of 180 hours. Time is spent 15% in lecture, 50% on assignments and 34% on review + studying.

Time breakdown for average course



Courses varied considerably based on whether they had assignments, a term paper, a midterm or a final exam.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Lecture	Time spent attending lectures. I attended approximately 95% of lectures. This does not include previewing or reviewing lectures.
Lecture Review	Time spent reviewing lecture material up to 2 days before or 2 days after the corresponding lecture.
Reading	Assigned reading. Does not include previewing or reviewing lecture material.
Assignments	Any course material that is submitted for grading excluding exams and term papers.
Term Paper	A research proposal, research paper, or referee report. Requires at least 3 pages of writing and is due at the end of the term.
Midterm	Time spent studying and writing a midterm exam. All courses had one or zero midterm exams.
Final	Time spent studying and writing a final exam. All courses had one or zero final exams.
Total Assignments	Sum of time spent on Assignments and Term Paper. Designed to capture any time spent on graded course material and to exclude time spent attending lecture or studying the material.
Review + Studying	Sum of time spent on Lecture Review, Reading, Midterm, and Final. Designed to capture any time spent studying the course material.