

TOPICS IN ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Monmouth College
Spring 2024

Instructor: Brian H. Park

Time: Weekly, TBD

Email: BPARK@monmouthcollege.edu

Venue: CSB 248

Course Description:

The modern advances made in the field of Economics are not fully presented in the confines of courses designed for a broad audience. This course aims to provide individualized curricula for students who are invested in the cutting edge of economic research, including applied econometric analysis of causal impacts, the evaluation and critique of peer-reviewed publications, and drafting independent research project proposals.

Learning Objectives:

This course aims to equip students with the ability to...

- Understand the modern advances made in economic research.
- Differentiate trivial correlation from causality.
- Evaluate the validity of theories and rhetoric based on data.
- Develop and enrich an independent research agenda.

Requirements:

Students enrolled in this course will meet with the instructor no less than once a week for a discussion that is no shorter than 60 minutes per session. For each discussion session, the students and instructor will discuss the material assigned the previous week, develop research ideas, or analyze articles to draft referee reports. While there is no single textbook for this course, the instructor will provide selected chapters from textbooks, excerpts from journal articles, and presentations/-documentaries from experts in the field. Please see the attached reading list for specifics.

Workload Expectation:

Aside from the 60 minute weekly meetings, students should expect to spend at a minimum 5 extra hours per week to finish the reading assignments, drafting referee reports, and developing their research proposals for a weekly minimum workload of 6 hours.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated across three aspects; discussions, refreee reports, and a research proposal.

- **Discussions (40%)**

- During weekly meetings, the student and instructor will engage in a discussion of the previously assigned material.
- The topic and material will vary depending on the student's specific area of interest and the advancements made over the semester.
- At the end of each session, students will submit a short (approximately 1 page) report summarizing the outcome of the discussion session.

- **Refree Reports (20%)**

- Over the course of the semester, students will complete 2 referee reports based on select peer-reviewed publications.
- The paper will be chosen by the student with assistance from the instructor, on a topic that the student expresses interest in.
- At least one discussion session will be scheduled specifically for the purpose of reviewing and drafting each referee report.

- **Research Proposal (40%)**

- The final project for this course will be an original research proposal on a topic of the student's choice.
- Students will submit a short summary of their research proposal, for which the instructor will provide feedback.
- Following feedback and further discussion, the student will produce a final version of the research proposal (approximately 3–5 pages long).
- Should the student wish to conduct research based on this final proposal, the instructor may provide follow-up support and resources.

Reading List:

- **Recommended Textbooks**

- Levitt, S. D., & Dubner, S. J. (2006). *Freakonomics*. Harper Trophy.
- Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2008). *Mostly harmless econometrics*. Princeton University Press.
- Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J. S. (2014). *Mastering 'Metrics: The path from cause to effect*. Princeton University Press.

- **Optional Textbooks**

- Wooldridge, J. M. (2016). *Introductory Econometrics*. 7th Edition. Cengage.
- Imbens, G. W., & Rubin, D. B. (2015). *Causal Inference for Statistics, Social, and Biomedical Sciences*. Cambridge University Press.

- **Natural Experiments**

- Card, D. (1990). The impact of the Mariel boatlift on the Miami labor market. *ILR Review*, 43(2), 245-257.
- Hornbeck, R. (2012). The enduring impact of the American Dust Bowl: Short-and long-run adjustments to environmental catastrophe. *American Economic Review*, 102(4), 1477-1507.

- **Instrument Variables**

- Angrist, J. D., & Krueger, A. B. (1991). Does compulsory school attendance affect schooling and earnings?. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 106(4), 979-1014.
- Angrist, J. D., Graddy, K., & Imbens, G. W. (2000). The interpretation of instrumental variables estimators in simultaneous equations models with an application to the demand for fish. *Review of Economic Studies*, 67(3), 499-527.
- Schlenker, W., & Walker, W. R. (2016). Airports, air pollution, and contemporaneous health. *Review of Economic Studies*, 83(2), 768-809.

- **Difference-in-Differences**

- Card, D., & Krueger, A. B. (1993). Minimum wages and employment: A case study of the fast food industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. *American Economic Review*, 84(4), 772-793.
- Duflo, E. (2001). Schooling and labor market consequences of school construction in Indonesia: Evidence from an unusual policy experiment. *American Economic Review*, 91(4), 795-813.
- Di Tella, R., & Schargrodskey, E. (2004). Do police reduce crime? Estimates using the allocation of police forces after a terrorist attack. *American Economic Review*, 94(1), 115-133.
- Braghieri, L., Levy, R. E., & Makarin, A. (2022). Social media and mental health. *American Economic Review*, 112(11), 3660-3693.

- **Regression Discontinuity**

- Angrist, J. D., & Lavy, V. (1999). Using Maimonides' rule to estimate the effect of class size on scholastic achievement. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114(2), 533-575.
- Chen, Y., Ebenstein, A., Greenstone, M., & Li, H. (2013). Evidence on the impact of sustained exposure to air pollution on life expectancy from China's Huai River policy. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(32), 12936-12941.
- Anderson, M. L. (2014). Subways, strikes, and slowdowns: The impacts of public transit on traffic congestion. *American Economic Review*, 104(9), 2763-2796.
- Howell, S. T. (2017). Financing innovation: Evidence from R&D grants. *American Economic Review*, 107(4), 1136-1164.

- **Matching**

- Dehejia, R. H., & Wahba, S. (1998). Causal effects in non-experimental studies: Re-evaluating the evaluation of training programs. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 94(448), 1053-1062.

Academic Integrity:

As academic dishonesty is a direct threat to the integrity and intellectual mission of our institution, all students are expected to abide by the Monmouth College [Code of Academic Integrity](#). A non-exhaustive list of academic misconduct include: plagiarism, cheating, improper collaboration, submitting identical work across multiple courses without prior approval, etc. All incidents of academic misconduct will be handled according to Monmouth College regulations.

Accessibility Success:

The Academic Support and Accessibility Services Office offers free resources to assist students with their academic success. Programs include supplemental instruction classes, drop-in and appointment tutoring, as well as individual academic coaching. Our office is here to help all students excel academically, as every student can work toward better grades, practice stronger study skills, and manage their time effectively. Please email academicsupport@monmouthcollege.edu for assistance.

Accessibility Services:

Should any student qualify for accommodations due to disabilities, they should submit their accommodation letter from the Accessibility Services Office (ASO) to the instructor so that necessary measures can be taken on their behalf. Information regarding the ASO can be found at [the Accessibility Services webpage](#), by calling their office at 309-457-2257, or by reaching out via email to access@monmouthcollege.edu. Also, at any point, if you feel that you need any extra assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor.

Diversity and Inclusion:

We at Monmouth College believe that, to serve the mission of academic endeavors, it is essential for our members to represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. All members of the community must feel safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning. While working together to build this community, we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner.
- Keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature.

To better promote an inclusive environment, please reach out to the instructor if:

- You have a name and/or pronouns that differ from your official records.
- There are circumstances affecting your ability to participate.
- You feel like your performance in class is impacted by experiences outside of class.
- Something was said in class that made you feel uncomfortable or marginalized.
- You want to talk about something else.

Wellness Services:

The College is committed to supporting all aspects of your life on campus, including mental and physical health.

- Health Clinic
 - Located in the lower level of McMichael Residence Hall, the health clinic is open Monday-Friday 9 AM to 1 PM. For any questions or requests, students may reach out to health-center@monmouthcollege.edu, or call their office at 309-536-6055.
- Mental Healthcare
 - TimelyCare provides counseling for emotional and mental health through two channels:
 - * TalkNow: TalkNow provides on-demand 24/7 support, health literacy, and crisis management by master's-level behavioral health professionals and manages support care progression and referrals. The wait for connecting to the first available provider is less than five minutes. Access to TalkNow counseling is *unlimited*.
 - * Scheduled Councilling: Enables students to access up to 12 scheduled counseling appointments through the academic year with licensed counselors. Students can select their counselor and the appointment day and time that best fits their schedule.
- Urgent Situations
 - Always, students facing a crisis should contact Campus Safety at 309-457-3456 or law enforcement at 911. Suicide resources are The National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK, and the local Bridgeway Crisis Hotline at 800-322-7143.

Links to Useful Resources:

Students may also find the following resources helpful, and are encouraged to review the services provided by Monmouth College.

- [Writing Center](#)
- [Religious & Spiritual Life](#)
- [Office for Equity, Inclusion & Community](#)
- [Wackerle Center for Career, Leadership & Fellowships](#)
- [Hewes Library](#)