

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.
- Adopt a framework for differentiating 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. 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. Some examples may include:

- Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2008). *Mostly harmless econometrics*. Princeton University Press.
- Levitt, S. D., & Dubner, S. J. (2006). *Freakonomics*. Harper Trophy.
- Schlenker, W., & Walker, W. R. (2016). Airports, air pollution, and contemporaneous health. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 83(2), 768-809.
- Card, D., & Krueger, A. B. (1993). Minimum wages and employment: A case study of the fast food industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. *The American Economic Review*, 84(4), 772-793.
- Angrist, J. D., & Lavy, V. (1999). Using Maimonides' rule to estimate the effect of class size on scholastic achievement. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114(2), 533-575.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated across three aspects; discussions, referee 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.

- **Referee 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.

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.