# Econ 771: Spring 2026 Syllabus

## Course description

This course explores the industrial organization of healthcare markets in the U.S., sometimes referred to as supply-side health economics or the economics of healthcare (to differentiate from the economics of health). We will focus on the following areas: health insurance, physician agency, physician learning, healthcare pricing and competition, and information disclosure. As we cover some of the key papers in these areas, we will discuss and employ tools from the fields of empirical IO and causal inference. These methods will be discuseed as needed throughout the course, but students are expected to have a working knowledge of these methods prior to the start of the course.

## Learning outcomes

I have four central goals for this course:

1. Synthesize the current literature in each of the main areas of health economics covered in this class
2. Apply standard causal inference techniques in the area of healthcare
3. Critically evaluate key papers in the field, identifying core strengths of the research
4. Develop your own preliminary research in some area of healthcare economics

Our class times and your presentations are designed to help achieve the first goal; the second and third goals align with our homework assignments; and the final goal is achieved through the research proposals and research plan. The assignments are described in more detail on the class assignments page.

## Text, Software, and Class Materials

1. **Readings:** As an elective PhD course, we will rely on academic papers from the reading list in each module. I expect everyone to read the papers in advance and come to class with questions on the study's contribution, empirical techniques, identification strategies,

and datasets used. My goal with each paper is to discuss the analysis in as much detail as possible within our time constraints. As such, we'll focus on relatively fewer papers in class. I've provided a more comprehensive reading list in each module for those interested in additional readings in a specific area.

2. **Software:** For anything data related, I'll use `R`, but you are free to use whatever software you're most comfortable with in your empirical work. I encourage you to use `R`, `Stata`, or `Python` simply because these are the most common programs used in practice right now. You'll also need to have a basic working knowledge of Git and GitHub. If you're new to these tools, take a look at Grant McDermott's notes on Data Science for Economists as well as Jenny Bryan's online reference book, Happy Git and GitHub with R.

3. **Slides and Notes:** All presentations will be made available on our class website or Canvas.

## Course policies

Various policies for this course are described below. Basically, let's all work to be good citizens and take seriously our various roles as a student, teacher, friend, colleague, human, etc.

### Academic integrity

The Emory University Honor Code is taken seriously and governs all work in this course. Details about the Honor Code are available in the Laney Graduate School Handbook and available online here. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to plagiarize, to deviate from the instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council.

### Accessibility services

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that accommodations are necessary, you may register with Accessibility Services at (404)727-9877 or via e-mail at accessibility@emory.edu. To register with OAS, students must self identify and initiate contact with the OAS office.

### Communication

I will post regular announcements to the class on **Canvas**, so please set up your notifications accordingly. I will also use **Canvas** to post all grades and any other information that needs to stay in the class (like our **Zoom** meeting link for virtual meetings, if needed). All other course materials will be available on our class website. Please feel free to reach out to me for any reason. I generally respond to all e-mails within 24 hours.

### Office Hours

My designated office hours are 1:00-2:30pm on Tuesday and Thursday in R418 of the R. Randall Rollins building. I'm happy to meet outside of normal office hours as well. Please feel free to schedule another time to meet by following the link to select a time that works for you, https://mccarthy-meetings.youcanbook.me. Unless otherwise noted, all meetings will be held in my office. If you need to meet virtually, please let me know and I'll send you a **Zoom** link.

### Attendance

While there is no official "attendance" credit, everyone is expected to attend all class sessions. Given our small class, it is very important that we are all present and engaged.

## Assignments and Grading

There are four main assignments throughout the semester. I describe each assignment below, with more detail provided on our assignments page.

### Research Proposals and Final Plans

You will submit three research proposals throughout the semester. These are short, 1-2 page documents that outline a problem/motivation, a related research question, potential data to help answer this question, and a proposed empirical strategy. The goal of these proposals is to help you develop your own research ideas and to get feedback from me and your classmates.

Toward the end of the semester, I will meet with each of you (one-on-one) to discuss your proposals. Based on that feedback, you will develop one of these proposals into a more complete research plan. Details of the research proposal and plans are available on the assignments page of our class website.

### Presentations

You will present four papers throughout the course of the semester. Please note your selected papers and class dates on the **presentations** tab of our shared Google Sheet no later than **Friday, January 16**. If you do not select papers by then, I'll have to assign papers unilaterally. The complete list of potential papers to present and details of the expectations for each presentation are available on the assignments page of our class website. Please look to the class schedule for a list of potential papers for each class day.

### Empirical Exercises

There is an applied component of this course where we spend some time with a real-life causal inference question. Raw data for each exercise will be provided on our class OneDrive notebook, the link to which is on **Canvas**, or simply through the paper's replication package online. There are four possible empirical exercises, from which you must choose one. Please note your selections on the **exercises** tab of our shared Google Sheet no later than **Thursday, January 29**.

### Excellence Blueprint

Rather than writing a referee-style critique that emphasizes flaws, this assignment asks you to analyze what makes a published paper successful and influential. Your report should explain the specific research design choices and writing decisions that justify the paper's publication and reputation, focusing on both the scientific contribution (question, identification, and fit in the literature) and the art of execution (motivation, structure, clarity, and policy relevance). The goal is to understand how strong papers persuade readers and advance the field—not how they could have been rejected. Details are avilable on the assignments page of our class website. You can submit your excellence blueprint for one of the four papers that you select to present.

### Important Deadlines

This section is just to highlight important dates for assignments throughout the semester. Note that late assignments will receive an automatic 5% reduction in the grade for each day the assignment is turned in after the due date.

- **Select Papers to Present** no later than **January 16**: Note the papers you plan to present on the **presentations** tab of our shared Google Sheet (link available on Canvas). Only one student per paper, so this is first-come first-served. Remember you need to select four papers to present throughout the semester. Please spread these presentations out over the semester.

- **Select Empirical Exercise** no later than **January 29**: Note your selection on the **exercises** tab of our shared Google Sheet. No more than two students per exercise.
- The first **Research Proposal** is due on **February 5**
- The second **Research Proposal** is due on **February 26**
- The **Excellence Blueprint** is due on **March 17**
- The third **Research Proposal** is due on **March 26**
- **Final Research Plans** are due on **April 21** and will be presented in class on **April 21 and April 23**

- **Empirical Exercises** are due on **April 23**

## Final grades

- **40%** for research proposals (10% for each proposal and 10% for the research plan)
- **20%** for empirical exercises
- **20%** for excellence blueprint
- **20%** for presentations of selected papers (5% each)

Letter grades will be assigned at the end of the course based on total score achieved: (A = 100-93%, A- = 92.99-90%, B+ = 89.99-87%, B = 86.99-83%, B- = 82.99-80%, C+ = 79.99-77%, C = 76.99-73%, C- = 72.99-70%, D+ = 69.99-67%, D = 66.99-60%, F = 60% or less)