

# Economic Research in Practice

ECN 310 (M002), Fall 2023

Professor Buzard

Research is the systematic investigation of a specific question or problem in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. *Economic Research in Practice* will allow students to explore economic questions of interest through engagement in the early stages of the research process. The course will enhance students' ability to integrate economic theory, quantitative research skills, and research using a project-based approach.

**Schedule:** WF 2:15–3:35, Eggers 040

## Office Hours and Contact Information:

- Professor Buzard (kbuzard@syr.edu, 315-443-4079): Mondays 2:30-3:30pm (except Sep. 18, Sep. 25, and Nov. 13) and Wednesdays 3:45-4:45pm in Eggers 131; or by appointment at kbuzard@syr.edu.
- Teaching Assistant: Dylan Eldred, by appointment at deldred@syr.edu.

**Prerequisites:** ECN 101 and permission of instructor

**Class Website:** All materials and announcements will be posted on Blackboard. Announcements will also be pushed to SU email accounts. It is each student's responsibility to check daily for announcements.

**Required Materials:** None. All readings will be provided.

**Course Objectives:** This course centers learning around students. Working most often in small teams, we will emphasize reflection and discussion of course material and how it relates to applications to help each other understand issues in which you are interested. This course will prepare students for research opportunities such as the Economics Distinction program, an honors thesis, and/or research assistantships. In the course of writing a research proposal on an economic topic of their choice, students will

1. learn the steps involved in conducting economic research;
2. utilize economic theory to frame analysis of research questions;
3. become familiar with basic concepts of statistical description as it applies to economic analysis;
4. select a research question of interest, write a literature review and formulate a hypothesis;
5. collect, clean, visualize and analyze relevant data using descriptive statistics;
6. interpret results, draw conclusions, communicate findings, and document the research process.

**Course Overview:** The course is experiential. Students are expected to read the assigned material before class and then will be guided through examples in which they will apply the key concepts in teams during class. Challenging concepts from the reading will also be explored and clarified via these examples. Portions of some class periods will be used to “workshop” students’ chosen projects so that students learn not only about the topic they have chosen but also from the areas that are being explored by their classmates. The in-class examples as well as a list of potential research topics will be drawn from labor, public, urban, trade and development economics as well as political economy. The instructor will also provide guidance for any student who wishes to explore an economic question not represented on the list of potential topics.

**Statistical Software:** Students will learn to use the statistical software Stata (available to students in the computer lab and on a Maxwell computing server) and version control software GitHub (open source) at the beginning of the course. Later in the course, students will also learn to use R/RStudio (open source).

**Required Readings:** Most readings are drawn from the textbooks listed below. In addition, I will periodically introduce articles, videos, and other materials from various sources. Links to, or copies of, each resource—including the chapters from the books listed below—will be provided on Blackboard.

1. Daniels, L., & Minot, N. (2019). An Introduction to Statistics and Data Analysis Using Stata®. SAGE Publications, Inc.
2. Greenlaw, S. A. (2005). Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research. South-Western College Publications.
3. Remler, D. K., & Van Ryzin, G. G. (2021). Research methods in practice: Strategies for description and causation. Sage Publications.
4. Schwabish, J. (2021). Better Data Visualizations: A Guide for Scholars, Researchers, and Wonks. Columbia University Press.
5. Topper, M. & Klinenberg, D. (2021). Data Wrangling for Economists.

**Grading:** The final course grade will be based on the following:

- Class participation (15%) and reading quizzes (15%): The score for class participation and reading quizzes (both take place for each class day of the semester) is calculated from 85% of the total points in each category. That is, you only need to get 85% of the quiz questions correct / participation points to get the full 15% of the grade for each category. This is to allow for family emergencies, illness, job interviews, technology problems and similar circumstances since there is no way to make up these portions of the course. No other allowances will be made; this policy substitutes for ‘excused’ absences.
- Skills-based assignments (30%): There will be a number of short assignments throughout the semester to build your skills toward completing the course project. Most of these will be able to be completed during class sessions.

- **Course project (40%):** You will choose a project topic during the first two weeks of class and develop it through a series of tasks throughout the semester. You can choose between a number of projects proposed by various faculty in the Economics Department, or you can develop a project topic yourself. You will work in groups of two to four students of your choosing. Project topics are first-come, first-served.

**Course Benefits:** This course will engage a diverse group of early-career students in carefully curated research experiences and connect those who wish for further research opportunities to appropriate mentoring. Providing this mentoring along with early education in research methods will allow students to take advantage of the full range of research opportunities offered by our department. We will track student outcomes so that we can help faculty screen candidates for research assistant positions as well as our economics distinction and B.S./M.A. programs. Participation in this course will provide context for the econometric courses and allow students in the distinction courses to go further in their independent research projects. The course will also help to increase both the number and diversity of economics majors who successfully apply to Ph.D. programs.

#### Course Policies:

1. SU's **religious observances policy** recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.
2. Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please call (315) 443-4498 or email [disabilityresources@syr.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@syr.edu) for more detailed information.
3. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit and for upholding course-specific, as well as university-wide, academic integrity expectations. The policy governs citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and truthfulness in all academic matters, including course attendance and participation. The policy states that any work a student submits for a course must be solely their own unless the instructor explicitly allows collaboration or editing. The policy also requires students to acknowledge their use of other peoples' language, images or other original creative or scholarly work through appropriate citation. These expectations extend to the new, fast-growing realm of artificial intelligence (AI) as well as to the use of websites that charge fees or require uploading of course materials

to obtain exam solutions or assignments. Students are required to ask their instructor whether use of these tools is permitted – and if so, to what extent – before using them to complete any assignment or exam. Students are also required to seek advance permission from instructors if they wish to submit the same work in more than one course. Failure to receive this permission in advance may violate the Academic Integrity Policy. Upholding Academic Integrity includes abiding by instructors' individual course expectations, which may include the protection of their intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or otherwise share instructors' course materials without permission. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions up to an including failure of the course and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered, as outlined in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric.

4. Some work in this class may be submitted via the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin. Turnitin compares submitted documents against documents on the Internet and against student papers submitted to Turnitin at SU and at other colleges and universities. I will take your knowledge of the subject matter of this course and your writing level and style into account in interpreting the originality report. Keep in mind that all papers you submit for this class will become part of the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.
5. As stated in the University's Academic Rules and Regulations, student work prepared for this course in any media may be used for educational purposes. You grant permission to have your work used in this manner by registering for, and by continuing to be enrolled in, this course. After you have completed this course, any further use of your work will either be rendered anonymous by removing all your personal identification or your written permission will be secured. If you object in any way, please send me an email no later than the second week of class at kbuzard@syr.edu.
6. The use of electronic devices is permitted only for course purposes. Other use of electronic devices is not allowed and will be enforced by the deduction of participation points. The wearing of headphones during class is strictly prohibited.
7. English is the language of instruction and interaction in class at all times. As it is the sole language that is shared by all students in the learning community, participation points will be deducted for using a language other than English during class time.
8. You may not post any course materials on the internet or any other media. You may not share any of these materials in any way without my express written consent except for the explicit and time-limited purpose of collaborating with your classmates this semester.