

ECON 490: *Course Overview*

Email: tmackay@fullerton.edu

Plan for Today

Class introductions

Talk about:

- Course structure
- Assignments
- Doing well in this class

Finish with a review of basic statistics and introduction to R

About Me

My name is Taylor

- I got a PhD in Economics from UCI in 2022
- I also did an MA in econ at SDSU
- I do applied micro-style research on housing, poverty, and immigration

4th year at CSUF, 6th time teaching this class

Class Introductions

No ice breakers or fun facts about yourself

Instead, let's do the following:

- Complete a quick survey online

For the survey, scan QR code on the right

- Use your CSUF login
- URL is also on Canvas

Course Prerequisites

To enroll in ECON 490, you need to have taken:

- All of ECON 310, ECON 325, and ECON 340
- At least *one* of ECON 440, ISDS 361B, or a 400-level Economics elective

If you have a permit from Hugh and I to waive one of these, you are all set

- If you do not have a permit/permission, however, please speak to me **ASAP**

A Bit of Background

Students come to this course with a wide variety of backgrounds

- Some students have more/less exposure to statistics, coding, etc.
- Course is designed to get everyone on the same page with technical material

Over past 2 semesters, high variance in levels of basic professionalism

- Most semesters, 70-80+ percent of students don't have any issues
- However, trend appears headed in the wrong direction

As a result, I have adjusted course expectations and guidelines

Expectations for this Course

This class is important because it is required for you to graduate

- I expect you to treat this class, and your graduation, seriously
- This means showing up to class and being responsible for your performance

After today, I expect you to be aware of all course requirements from the syllabus

It is your responsibility to:

- Review all course material each week
- Carefully review all assignment requirements
- Ask questions *in advance* if you do not understand assignment requirements

Assignments for this Class

Category	% of Final Grade
In-Class Activities	40%
Homework	30%
Capstone Project	30%

Doing Well in this Class

Philosophy I've adopted for this course—ask you to do less than comparable courses elsewhere, but expect a higher level of mastery of remaining material

You should:

- Show up to class
- Carefully review lecture material and assigned reading
- Be confident opening/using R for basic data analysis tasks starting next week

In-Class Activities

Each week, we'll do some form of graded activity

- Generally, 1-2-page quizzes at start of class or an R coding activities
- These assignments are worth 40% of your final grade

Guidelines:

- You must complete these during the class in which they are assigned
- Your lowest in-class activity score will be dropped (i.e., excused absence)
- For classes meeting twice per week: missing one day but attending the activity day = 50% grade deduction for that week

Attendance and Class Conduct

Additional excused absences ***with documentation*** of either:

1. A medical or other serious personal/family issue
2. A scheduling conflict for student athletes (listed as “Actual Missed Classes”)

To receive credit, you must follow the ***Professional Conduct Policy***

- Disruptive, rude, or otherwise unprofessional behavior will result in a loss of in-class activity credit
- Escalating punishments for subsequent violations, up to and including the loss of the full 40% of final grades comprising In-Class Activities

Homework

Homework will count for 30% of your final grade

5 shorter-format R coding activities (20% combined, equally weighted)

- Introduced in class, due by next Monday

2-3 longer-format homework assignments (10% combined, equally weighted)

- Either a reading + short-answer questions, or a longer R data analysis task

Capstone Papers

Overall objective of this course is doing your own economics research

- This means writing a capstone paper
- Lectures are designed to give you the necessary tools to do this

You may work individually or with a partner (both of you must do data analysis)

Broad structure of the capstone assignment:

- 8-to-10-page research paper written
- Core of project is your own independent data analysis
- Final presentation + paper + intermediate assignments

Course Grading

Canvas assignments page explains each assignment in detail

- Rubrics will be available for each assignment explaining grading
- I'll post comments for all grade deductions on Canvas

Pay attention to feedback on Canvas!

- Capstone and coding activity assignments are iterative
- Key requirement for these assignments is fully responding to prior feedback

Late Assignment Submissions

Late assignments receive a 10% reduction in total possible score for each day late

- After 7 days, unsubmitted assignments will **automatically** receive a score of 0
- I will **not** accept any assignments after this deadline

Teaching this class is extremely time- and labor-intensive

- Deadlines are set to ensure I have adequate time for instruction, course prep, etc.
- If you have questions about assignments, I am happy to help **before** they are due

After an assignment deadline has passed, it is your responsibility to submit it ASAP

- I will **not** respond to questions asking for detailed feedback, code review, etc. after the deadline for an assignment submission has passed

AI Policy

Some context: I use AI, I know students use AI, we will use AI in this class

Two overarching rules regarding AI:

- *All* written submissions for your capstone assignments must be *in your own words*
- If you are ever unsure about how you're using AI, ask me *before* submission

If for *any* reason I suspect *any* of the writing for a capstone assignment was generated via an AI/LLM (or used with only light editing), I reserve the right to convert that assignment for that student into an in-person exam format

Doing Well in this Course

From prior semesters, students who did well tended to...

- Ask lots of questions & take advantage of office hours and email
- Stay on top of smaller assignments and not miss deadlines

My goal is for everyone to graduate!

- If you have questions, I am always happy to help

Goals for this Class

Two broad objectives (from the syllabus):

- Learn what modern (empirical) economics research looks like
- Learn how to conduct your own economic research

After this fall, you probably won't ever draw another graph by hand or take FOCs!

In practice, class is about getting comfortable working with & thinking about data

- This is what people think of when they see “BA in econ” on a resume
- Class assignments are designed to help you market yourself as an econ major

Getting Comfortable Working with Data

This class places a heavy emphasis on working with data

Goal is to give you *general* skills that are helpful in econ-related jobs

- We'll learn to use R...
- But most important topics are concepts like relationships, visualization, etc.

Ultimately, produce final projects that you can use to highlight skills on a resume, in an interview, etc.

Data-Related Jobs

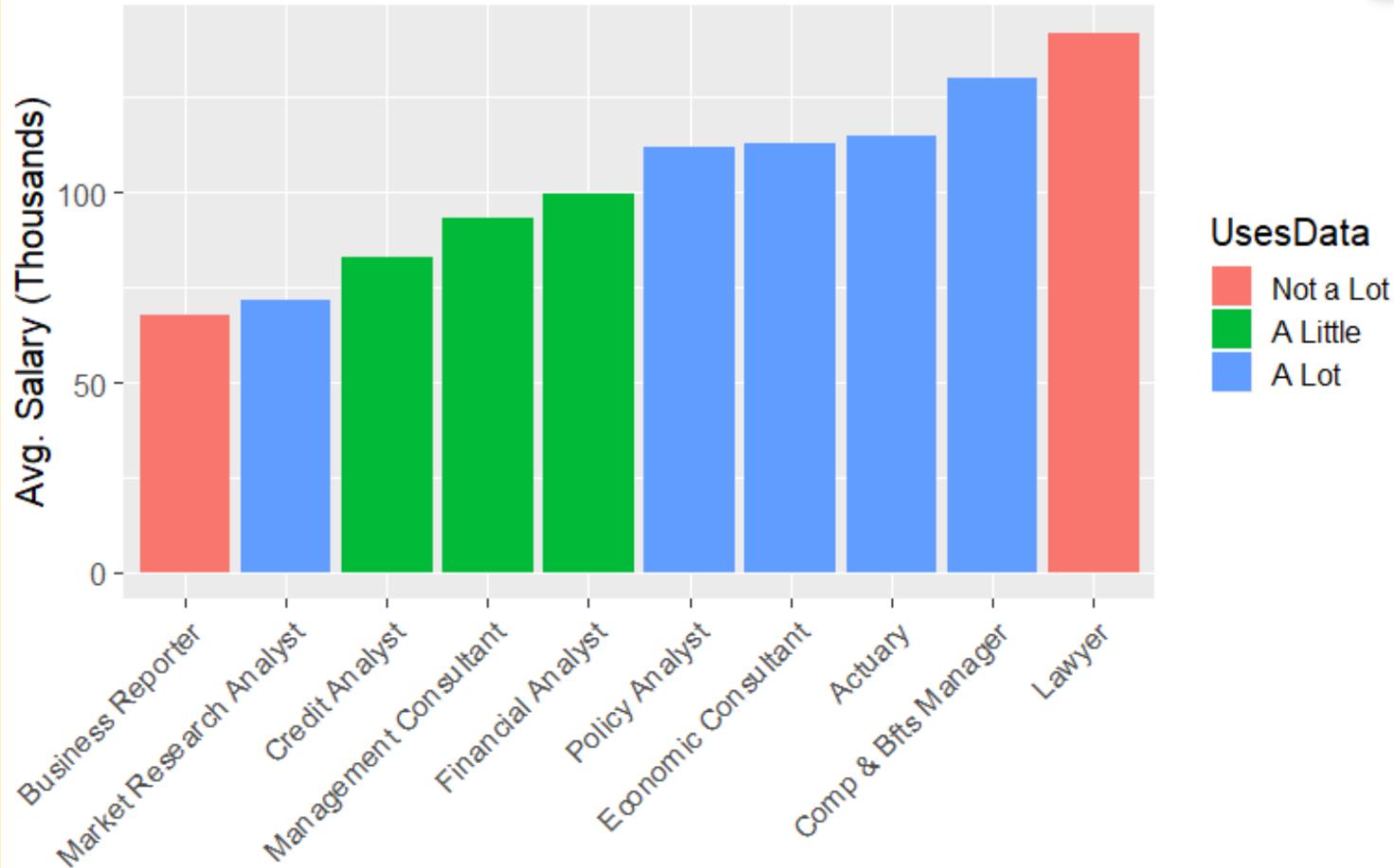
As a student, I was always a bit wary when professors said their class was “useful”

- Professors work as professors... what about other jobs?
- I spend a lot of time thinking about generalizability for course content

When I talk about econ-related jobs as “using data” or being “data-adjacent,” I don’t just mean data science or academic research

This can include pricing strategy for Marriott (my wife), economic consulting (my brother), legislative analyst for CA’s state legislature (old classmate), etc.

Do Top-Ten Econ Major Jobs Use Data?



Things to Do for Next Week

Things to do this week:

- Make sure you have access to R + RStudio (either on your PC or in the cloud)
- Complete the first coding activity
- Review lecture material

Next week:

- Submit coding activity to Canvas **before** lecture
- Lecture will start with a quick quiz on stats + R material from tonight

In general, anything on lecture slides or R activity is fair game for the quiz