

Economics 495: Undergraduate Thesis Seminar I
Syracuse University
Fall 2023

Instructor: Maria Zhu

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Office: 426 Eggers Hall

Office Hours: W 1:00-3:00PM (in-person or virtual)

- To make appointment: <https://profzhu-officehours.youcanbook.me>

Class: MW 3:45-5:05PM, Eggers Hall 040

Course Description: The economics distinction program is designed to support undergraduate students who want to conduct original, high-quality research in economics. The distinction program is comprised of two courses: ECN 495 (Economic Thesis I) and ECN 496 (Economic Thesis II), which are scheduled in the fall and spring semesters, respectively. In the first course, students use economic theory and statistical principles to formulate a compelling research agenda. This includes developing an independent research question and coming up with an empirical strategy and data sources to answer this question. In the second course, students execute their research plans, present their work-in-progress, and write their theses. Students who do not complete Seminar I satisfactorily will not be given permission to enroll in Seminar II.

Prerequisites: Registration for the course is by invitation only. Students are required to complete the two-semester econometrics sequence, ECN 521 and ECN522, or its equivalent. (ECN422 is not an acceptable equivalent.) Students who have not taken these courses may take them in tandem with the economics distinction program.

Software: Empirical work will be conducted using Stata. I will provide several Stata tutorials in class and can help troubleshoot through complex tasks, but students are expected to write their own code, especially for routine tasks or more complex tasks that have already been discussed in class. To access Stata, students have three options: (1) utilize the computer lab in 030 Eggers Hall, (2) purchase a Stata license for personal use, and (3) use the virtual computers through the Maxwell School.

Office Hours: Office hours are available both in-person and virtually. You can sign up for office hour slots using the link at the top of the page. Note that you will be asked to select whether you would like to meet in-person or virtually when you book your appointment. If the scheduled Office Hours times do not work with your schedule, please feel free to email me and we can set up an alternative meeting time.

Evaluation: In Thesis Seminar I, students will be evaluated on the following criteria: economics seminars, homework assignments, weekly progress, research proposal, and research presentation. Attendance is mandatory.

- **Economics Seminars (10%):** The economics department hosts three economics seminars: applied microeconomics, trade and development, and econometrics

(<https://answers.syr.edu/display/Maxwell/Economics+Seminar+Series>). Students are required to attend at least two seminars each semester and submit a short summary of the research for each seminar. While summaries are due at the end of the semester, seminars typically take place well before the last week of classes. It is your responsibility to plan your seminar attendance in advance so that you are able to complete this assignment.

- **Attendance/Participation (10%):** Students are expected to attend class and arrive on time, unless there is an extenuating circumstance (illness, family emergency, job interview, etc.). Students are expected to be doing work for this course while in class. Please notify me in advance if you will be missing class.
- **Homework assignments (20%):** Homework will be assigned throughout the semester as needed. Homework will consist of both reading and written assignments.
- **Weekly progress (20%):** Progress will be assessed each week through discussion and check-ins in class.
- **Research proposal (30%) and presentation (10%):** Once students have committed to a research topic, students must write a research proposal and present their research proposal in class. Students will be graded on the importance, soundness, thoroughness, and feasibility of their research proposal and empirical strategy.

Feedback: I am always happy to look at your work (draft, slides, proposals, etc.) in advance and provide feedback. Please feel free to send me an email with any material you would like me to look over, and I will get back to you within 72 hours (three days). Please budget enough time for me to look over your materials in this time frame—I am unable to do last minute turnarounds!

University Attendance Policy: Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. It is a federal requirement that students who do not attend or cease to attend a class to be reported at the time of determination by the faculty that the student never attended or stopped attending the class.

Academic Integrity: Complete academic honesty is expected of all students. Any incidence of academic dishonesty, as defined by the SU Academic Integrity Policy will result in both course sanctions and formal notification of the College of Arts & Sciences. For more information about the policy: <http://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy/>. In this course, students are encouraged to study together, but exams must represent the work of the individual student.

Center for Disability Resources: Students with disabilities who desire accommodations are asked to go through the Center for Disability Resources (CDR). To reach CDR, please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityresources@syr.edu. CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. CDR policy stipulates that all paperwork associated with academic accommodations due to a disability be completed and returned to their office at least 10 days in advance of the

exam date requested. All scheduled exams will be administered in the CDR testing center at 804 University Avenue. You must contact the CDR Service Coordinator at least 2 days prior to the scheduled exam to confirm the date and time of the event. Only students who register with the CDR office in a timely manner will be given accommodations on exams.

Faith Tradition Observance: Syracuse University's religious observance policy (<https://policies.syr.edu/policies/university-governance-ethics-integrity-and-legal-compliance/religious-observances-policy/>) recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given 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.

Mental Health: Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. There are a range of resources available at the Barnes Center (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) and I encourage you to seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000.

Due Dates

- Class survey (Assignment 0): **8/30**
- Paper summaries (Assignment 1): **9/25**
- Research ideas (Assignment 2): **10/23**
- Data/empirical strategy write-up (Assignment 3): **11/17**
- Economics seminar summaries: **12/13**
- Research proposal: **12/15**
- Research presentation: Presentations will take place in class during the **last two weeks of classes (12/4-12/11)**. You should be prepared to present on any of these dates, and your specific presentation date will be assigned during the semester.