ECON 6901
Research Methods for Economists I
Spring 2016

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Class Time & Location: T 6:30 – 9:15 p.m.  Friday 207
Office Hours: T 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.  By appointment

Course Description

ECON 6901. Research Methods for Economists I. (3G) Prerequisites: ECON 6112 or ECON 6113, and either ECON 6201, ECON 6202 or MBAD/FINN 6157. Research programs in economics; problem identification; interpretation of statistical results, bibliographic search, data sources and collection, selection of statistical technique, preparation of reports and proposals.

Course Objective

The objective of this course is to introduce students to critical evaluations of published and unpublished research, to support students in finding suitable research topics, and to develop these into full-blown research projects with the intention that the completed projects (at the end of the ECON 6902 course) be at the level of papers suitable for academic conference presentations and/or submissions to academic journals.

Recommended Reading

Students will find the following to be a very useful guide to academic writing:


Please note that this classic style manual costs less than $10 on Amazon.com

Attendance and Class Participation

Students are expected to attend all classes (unless excused by the instructors) and to participate in the classroom discussion of topics and projects presentations. Student participation – not simply class attendance – is essential.

Your performance in this aspect of the class will constitute 15% of your final grade for the course.
**Assignments**

The remaining 85% of your final course grade will be based on your performance on six assignments. Due dates and individual weightings for these assignments are listed on the course schedule in the following section.

**Assignment 1 (10% of final course grade)**

This assignment is a replication and critique of a published journal article by Durden and Perri:


Write a paper that summarizes and critiques the authors’ research question(s), theory, model specification, data, and empirical results. Using the data provided in the paper, replicate the paper’s regression results (as reported in Table 2). Do you agree with the paper’s conclusions? What suggestions would you make to improve the paper’s theoretical model and regression model to better connect theory and empirical results?

Your critique should be no more than 5 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins) including tables. Attach your computer program/output as an appendix (these do not count as part of the 5 pages).

**Assignment 2 (10% of final course grade)**

Each individual must complete a data manipulation task. The details of this assignment are provided in a separate handout.

**Assignment 3 (10% of final course grade)**

Each group must choose a topic for study that could serve as the basis of a research project and select a paper to review from the academic literature on the topic. Each individual in the group must write a paper critiquing this article that summarizes the purpose, theory, methodology, and main findings of the article chosen by the group. Note that you do not need to replicate the results of this paper.

The critique should be no more than 5 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins). One week prior to turning in this critique, the group must provide each instructor with both an electronic and hard copy of the paper to be critiqued. The individual critiques should be sent electronically to each instructor.

**Assignment 4 (15% of final course grade)**

Each group must identify a research question. Jointly write a paper of no more than 15 pages (double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins) that discusses the general topic and specific research question, reviews the relevant academic literature, and justifies the particular research question the group proposes to examine.
Each group will also make a presentation (most probably using PowerPoint, though other classes of slides, such as Beamer, are acceptable) to the class and answer questions arising from the presentation. All group members will be expected to provide an appropriate contribution. Following the presentation the group sends an electronic copy of the presentation to each instructor.

**Assignment 5 (10% of final course grade)**

Each group will make a presentation on the likely theoretical and/or empirical model and data sources the group expects to use to answer the research question.

Please note that the group does not submit a paper. However, as for Assignment 4, the group submits an electronic copy of the presentation to each instructor.

**Assignment 6 (10% of final course grade)**

Each group will make a presentation to the class about its preliminary empirical results (or at least, its state of progress).

Again, the group does not submit a paper. However, as for Assignments 4 and 5, the group submits an electronic copy of the presentation to each instructor.

**Assignment 7 (20% of final course grade)**

Each group submits a preliminary research project report. This is to be a formal report (not an outline or list of information) and must include discussions of the research question(s), relevant literature, data sources and descriptions, empirical methods, and preliminary empirical results. Just as importantly, the report will outline plans for completing the project in ECON 6902. These plans must discuss the topic each individual group member will pursue, and should also include any proposed extensions to the empirical model, checks for robustness, and additional spinoff research questions to be addressed.

**Course Schedule (Tentative)**

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1 (J 12)</td>
<td>Introduction, discussion of group formation and first assignment</td>
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<td>Week 2 (J 19)</td>
<td>Two examples of an empirical paper critique</td>
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<td>Week 3 (J 26)</td>
<td>Assignment 1 due at beginning of class</td>
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<td>Discussion of Durden and Perri paper</td>
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<td>Group memberships due</td>
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<td>Week 4 (F 2)</td>
<td>Return &amp; review of Assignment 1 in individual meetings with instructors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assignment 2 due at individual meeting</td>
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<td>Assignment 3 paper to be critiqued due 5:00 p.m. Friday (F 5) – send</td>
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<td>electronically to both instructors</td>
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<td>Week 5 (F 9)</td>
<td>Return &amp; review Assignments 2 individual meetings with instructors</td>
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<td>Assignment 3 due at individual meeting</td>
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Week 6 (F 16)  Return & review of assignment 3 at individual meetings
Week 7 (F23) Group meetings to discuss group research question
Week 8 (M 1) No class - assignment 4 papers due 4:30pm Friday (M 4) - send electronically to both instructors
Week 9 (M 8) No class – Spring Break
Week 10 (M 15) Assignment 4 presentations & discussion
Week 11 (M 22) Assignment 4 presentations & discussion
Week 12 (M 29) Group meetings with instructors to discuss empirical methods and data sources
Week 13 (A5) Assignment 5 presentations
Week 14 (A 12) Assignment 5 presentations
Week 15 (A 19) No class – groups work on assignments 6 & 7
Week 16 (A 26) Assignment 6 presentations & discussion
Week 17 (M 3) Assignment 6 presentations & discussion
Week 18 (M 10) Assignment 7 due at 8:00 p.m. (beginning of scheduled final exam period)

The above schedule is tentative. In large part, this stems from uncertainty about the number of research groups. If this number is sufficiently small to allow all groups adequate time to present in a single class period, we will likely change the schedule from week 10 onwards. If so, we will send out a revised schedule of class meetings prior to Spring Break.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated by the Belk College of Business or these instructors. Students have the responsibility to know and observe the requirements of the UNCC Code of Student Academic Integrity (this Code is online at http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html). The Code forbids cheating, fabrication, falsification, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Academic evaluation in this course includes a judgment that the student's work is free from academic dishonesty of any type. Violations will be dealt with in the manner specified the Code. Students observing violations of the Code are expected to report this to the instructors.
Diversity

The Belk College of Business strives to create an inclusive academic climate in which the dignity of all individuals is respected and maintained. Therefore, we celebrate diversity that includes, but is not limited to, ability/disability, age, culture, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Adverse Weather

If the University is closed or if the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system is closed, there will be no class. If you commute in from outside the county and there is adverse weather there (but not in Mecklenburg County), make your own decision to attend or not, but remember we do not want you to endanger life or limb just to get to class.

Communication

To repeat: Dr. Gandar’s email address is jmgandar@uncc.edu and Dr. Zillante’s email address is azillant@uncc.edu. Always email both of us. Please include "ECON 6901 student question" in the subject line to ensure a prompt reply. If the question is such that all students could benefit from a reply, we may reply to all students in the class.

When we email an individual or the entire class, we will use your official university email address. You are responsible for monitoring this address: we will not use your private address.

Disability Services

UNC Charlotte is committed to access to education. If you have a disability and need academic accommodations, please provide a letter of accommodation from Disability Services early in the semester. For more information on accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services at 704-687-0040 or visit their office at Fretwell 230.