

University of Redlands Department of Economics
ECON-310-02: Research Methods in Economics
Spring 2020
Tuesdays 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM; Hall of Letters 213

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Office Hours: Tuesdays – 2:30 to 3:30; Wednesdays – 11:00 to noon; or by appointment

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Course Description

Welcome to Research Methods in Economics! In this class, we will be taking a step back from the content that you've been learning in other economics courses to think about how economists approach research and how that might translate to an undergraduate level. After beginning the course with a broad overview of research, we will discuss recent research trends in economics, connecting the coursework you have been completing with the output of professional economists. Then, you will start to conduct your own basic research, learning how to narrow down topics, formulate questions and problems, and use data and theory in your own work. To that end, the course will be heavily discussion- and practice-based. You will have the opportunity to share your frustrations and breakthroughs in the research process and learn from how others navigate the process. My hope is that the skills that you learn in this course will prove useful in the Senior Seminar and whatever profession or graduate program you join after your time at Redlands.

Course Objectives

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

- Understand some of the dominant practices of approaching research in economics
- Digest the main ideas of a research article, even if you cannot fully understand the mathematical and statistical methods used
- Find and engage with key sources in the field of economics
- Develop a strategy for answering basic economic questions with theory, data, and an evaluation of previous work on the subject in a process of formulating claims and providing reasoning and evidence to support it

Required Text

Wayne C. Booth *et al.* (2016) *The Craft of Research*, Fourth Edition. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Assignments

Readings: Please read all assignments before class and come prepared to discuss the material. This course focuses on developing best practices, and it will rely heavily on large- and small-group discussions and putting what you have read about into practice.

Coursework/homework: You will often be asked to produce small assignments, such as bringing articles to class to discuss or engaging in short writing exercises. These are noted in the syllabus, sometimes with further guidance provided in the PowerPoint slides for the preceding class. You are responsible for completing all assignments. In each case, we will discuss some students' homework in class. If you do not share in class, however, you must email the assignment to me immediately after class in order to receive credit.

Analysis of a journal article: You will select an article by an economist in a peer-reviewed journal and analyze how it is constructed. Using concepts developed in class, you will analyze the development of the authors' argument and methods. You will also discuss the rhetorical tools that the authors use to build authority on their topic.

Short literature review: You will produce a short review of the academic literature on a topic of interest to you. The goal of the piece will be to successfully identify a topic of discussion among scholars and outline that discussion in a couple of pages. This is the first part of your term paper.

Term paper answering an economic question: Your final project of the semester will involve identifying an economic question, writing a short literature review (referred to above), and then using some sort of method common to economics to provide an answer to that question. You will present your results to the class in April.

Grading

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Term paper	25%
Homework and coursework	20%
Class Participation	15%
Journal article analysis	15%
Short literature review	10%
In-class economic question test	10%
Paper presentation	5%

Letter Grade	0-4 Scale	Percentage
A	4	95-100
A-	3.7	90-94
B+	3.3	85-89
B	3	80-84
B-	2.7	75-79
C+	2.3	70-74
C	2	65-69
C-	1.7	60-64
D+	1.3	55-59
D	1	50-54
F	0	0-50

Class Schedule, Readings, and Homework Due

Jan. 7	<i>Introduction</i>
Jan. 14	<i>What Is Research?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCoR, Chapters 1 & 2
Jan. 21	<i>Asking Economic Questions and Making Claims: An Introduction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCoR, Chapter 7 & 8
Jan. 28	<i>Research in Economics I</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework due: Review examples of economic research posted on Moodle for class; come prepared to discuss your assigned article

Feb. 4	<i>Research in Economics II</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jack Reardon, Maria Alejandra Madi, and Molly Scott Cato (2018) <i>Introducing a New Economics</i>, Chapter 2: “Knowledge and the Construction of Economic Models.” Frank Ackerman (2017) <i>Worst-Case Economics</i>, Chapter 2.
Feb. 11	<i>Presentation by Office of Career and Professional Development</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework due: Email article chosen for article analysis assignment to me for approval
Feb. 18	<i>From Topics to Questions, from Questions to Problems</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCoR, Chapters 3 and 4 Homework due: topic idea to develop in class
March 3	<i>Finding and Engaging with Sources</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCoR, Chapters 5 & 6 Homework due: Article analysis paper AND Be prepared to discuss how you find sources and which sources you find useful; what is a “good source?” What is your process for finding good articles?
March 10	<i>Claims, Evidence, and Warrants</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCoR, Chapters 9 – 11 Homework due: Make 3 good claims, supported by evidence for your upcoming paper, and with any needed warrants clearly articulated.
March 17	<i>Communicating Evidence Visually</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCoR, Chapter 15 Homework due: Literature review; AND find one example of a good visualization of economic data to share in class (email me a copy of the image) and explain why it’s a good visualization
March 24	<i>Research Exercise Day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class test on answering economic questions with data and theory
March 31	<i>Revision workshop</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework due: project drafts, brought to class for revision and review
April 7	<i>Final Presentations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework due: Term Papers
April 14	<i>Final Presentations: 9-11AM</i>

Note: Bullet points indicate which readings and assignments are to be prepared for class on the date listed.

Class Policies

Attendance: In order to get the most out of the course, it is imperative for you to attend every class. This is especially true in this course, which is heavily dependent on class discussion and work produced in class. If you frequently miss class, I will fill out an Academic Status Report, and your grade will be negatively impacted. Additionally, frequently arriving late will have a negative impact on your grade.

Academic Honesty: Unless explicitly specified, all work you turn in for this course should be yours alone. When using ideas other than your own in your work, I expect you to include proper citations. If you have any questions about expectations or policies in this area, you may both refer to the University Catalog (p. 17-24) and share any concerns you have regarding your own or anyone else’s behavior. **If a violation of academic honesty is found to have occurred, it will result in a loss of credit for the course.**

The University Catalog is available in its entirety here: <http://www.redlands.edu/study/registrars-office/course-catalogs/>

Laptops & Electronic Gadgets: While I normally do not allow any use of laptops and tablets in class without prior approval, we will frequently need them for class exercises. I will therefore let you know when you may use electronic devices. Please note that if I see that you are using them for another purpose when we are using them in class (browsing Facebook, for example), I will ask you to put away your device and your participation grade will suffer. Additionally, you are not allowed to use smartphones at all during class. Rather than police this publicly, I will merely make a note that you are not really “in” class if you are using an electronic device and you will be counted as absent.

Disability support: If a you have a disability that qualifies for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, you should contact Academic Success & Disability Services (ASDS). ASDS is located on the ground floor of the Armacost Library across from Human Resources and down the hall from the Jones Computer Center; their phone is 909-748-8069. The primary contact person is Amy Wilms, and the website is: <http://www.redlands.edu/student-life/academic-success-and-disability-services/disability-services/>

Discrimination and sexual assault: The University of Redlands is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students that is free of all forms of discrimination, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. The University of Redlands has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, no contact orders, and more. Please be aware all University of Redlands faculty members are “responsible employees,” which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

To report an incident, you can:

- Report online at: www.redlands.edu/titleix --> Report
- Contact the Title IX Office at 909-748-8916
 - Title IX Coordinator, Pat Caudle, pat_caudle@redlands.edu or 909-748-8171
 - Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Erica Moorer, erica_moorer@redlands.edu or 909-748-8916

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially (meaning not filing with the Title IX Office), you can contact any of the following on-campus resources:

- Counseling Service (<http://www.redlands.edu/student-life/health-and-psychological-services/counseling-center/>, 909-748-8108)
- Crisis Line: 909-748-8960
- Chaplain’s Office (<http://www.redlands.edu/student-life/campus-diversity-and-inclusion/religious-diversity/>, 909-748-8368)