

# University of Missouri – Columbia

**Fall 2021**

***Economics 8413  
Research Workshop I  
Syllabus***

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**Virtual Office Hours:**

by appointment (send me an email to make a Zoom appointment).

## CLASS DESCRIPTION

Economics 8413 is designed to help you write a research paper that is acceptable at the Master's level. For the most part, in this paper you will simply attempt to reproduce, and perhaps extend, a published empirical economics paper. Therefore, your first task is to identify a suitable paper. Some important characteristics of such a paper are as follows. 1) It must be published in a good economics journal. In general, unpublished papers (such as working papers) are not acceptable, but if you find one that you love feel free to ask me about the possibility of replicating it. To find a short list of good economics journals watch my lecture on how to replicate a paper. To find a longer list, google "economics journal rankings," and choose from the first 100 or so journals in the rankings. 2) The dataset used in the paper must be publicly available or the data can be fairly easily reconstructed from publicly-available sources. This is crucial! If you fail to verify this, you may find that you have to switch papers mid-semester. Finally, 3) the paper that you choose should have a good data section, one that explains what the author(s) approaches were, how they managed the data, and so on. If you are unable to identify a suitable paper, I will help you with that. But note that being able to find suitable research is itself part of the skills graded in this class, therefore it's preferable that you to go through the exercise of finding a suitable paper yourself, at least at first.

Once you have found a suitable paper, you will spend the rest of the semester:

- Reading the paper and other relevant literature.
- Gathering all the necessary data.
- Performing your estimations.
- Writing your paper.

Note: Exceptionally qualified and ambitious students may elect to write an original research paper, after consultation with me and an appropriate advisor (see below).

## YOUR MASTER'S COMMITTEE

Your master's committee will typically consist of three members: myself, as the instructor of Econ 8413, and who will serve as the main advisor; Dr. Saku Aura, the Director of Master's Programs; and Dr. Xinghe Wang, the previous Director of Master's Programs.

Ambitious students who elect to write an original research paper will have a different committee, whose chair will be their main advisor. Those students should approach me very early in the semester to discuss this possibility. If you are in a dual degree (e.g. with Statistics) you must follow this route. Your typical committee then has one or two professors from the Economics Department and one or two from your other department.

## GRADING

NOTE: grades will be awarded with + / -.

Grades will be based on your demonstrated skills in the following:

- i. Ability to do research. For those replicating a paper, you are assessed on: your ability to find good economic research; the quality of your STATA work, including

readability of your program, and whether it can be run; the quality of the documentation in your program files; the extensiveness and care of the work. If you are doing original research, you are assessed on: how interesting the economic question is; how the relevant data set and modeling tools are; and whether the statistical analysis answers the question that you posed.

- ii. Ability to write your research as an academic paper (see below).
- iii. Ability to present your work in front of an audience. This is tentative: I will try to organize presentations of your work, either by Zoom (if you are not in Columbia Missouri) or in person (if you are in Columbia Missouri).

Note: In this class, you are given the opportunity to complete your work in more than one semester, no questions asked. If, given your schedule and your other commitments, you feel that you'd like to elect that route, please let me know. Then the due dates shown on the last page will not be binding to you. At the end of the current semester, you will be assigned a grade of Incomplete. Do not enroll in any other classes that would "complete this class." Rather, keep doing your work. Once you submit all your work, I will change your Incomplete grade from this semester to a letter grade.

## STATA DO FILES, LOG FILES, AND DATA FILES

Most students will be doing their work using the STATA statistical package. You are highly encouraged to use this particular statistical package, because this is the one that I am most knowledgeable about, and that I can provide help with. I will provide an "Introduction to STATA" hand-out and a video class through Canvas. I will also help you if you have specific questions.

Part of your grade depends on your STATA work. So that I am able to check it, send me three files at the end of the semester:

- A STATA Do-file, that is, your STATA program.
- A STATA log file.
- At least one STATA data file.

See my hand-out on this. At my discretion, I may attempt to run your files in my computer.

## HOW TO WRITE YOUR PAPER

An ideal economics paper will probably have anywhere between 4 and 6 sections, sometimes more. For an empirical paper, one possible structure is described below, but note that this is just an example. You will have to decide which structure works best for your paper. The key is that the paper does a good job of explaining the economic problem at hand, not that it follows some rigid structure. But here is an example of a possible structure:

- i. Introduction. This is where you would tell your reader what your idea is, and why it is interesting. You should put your idea in the context of existing literature and real-world economic questions.
- ii. Literature review. This "section" can just be part of the introduction, as described above, or it can be a stand-alone section. No matter where you place it, please bear in mind that a BAD literature review is, at an extreme, just a collection of abstracts

of other papers. A GOOD literature review is something like a map. Just like a map locates cities and roads one in relation to another, a good literature review helps in locating each paper reviewed in relation to the other papers that you are discussing, and especially in relation to your own paper. Thus, it will probably have sentences such as “Paper X extended paper Y [in some way]”; or “Paper X disputed paper Y’s results”; or “Paper X used the empirical methodology prosed in papers Y and Z for a different data set”; and so on. That is, a good literature review allows the reader to create a mental map of the research done in one particular area, and to place your own paper within that map. Explain how your paper extends others’ work, or how it modifies it, or how your paper supports or contradicts previous research. The ultimate goal is to place YOUR research in context, to illuminate your research by referring to previous research.

- iii. Data. An ideal data section is one that would allow your reader to reproduce your data set, after just reading your paper. You must explain your sources, and any further data manipulations that you performed. Ask yourself if someone can, based on your description, reproduce your data set. If the answer is in the negative, consider revising and adding to your data section, as it may be incomplete.
- iv. Methodology. This is where you would explain the empirical model that you propose to estimate. You should have an economic rationale for it. This should be either a formal or an informal model. It is also here that you address any empirical issues (such as endogeneity in your data, omitted variables, etc.), and how you solve them. Or you may have two separate sections, one on the theory behind the model, another on empirical issues. Your choice!
- v. Analysis and results. In this section you may present the results of your statistical analysis. This should be accompanied by a discussion (for example, how do the results conform or oppose your initial expectations, as given by the theory). You may also discuss the robustness of the results to different model specifications.
- vi. Conclusion. In this section, you remind the reader what your question and methodology were, and what results you obtained.

## FINAL PAPER DEADLINE

Your **FINAL** paper will be due on **Friday, November 19**. Your grade will be based on this version of the paper. An early deadline is needed to allow enough time to submit form M-3 (see below). This is also the deadline to email me your STATA files, as described above.

## DEADLINES TO SUBMIT FORMS M-1 AND M-3

You probably have already submitted “Form M-1 - Plan of Study.” But if you have not, please contact department staff at the **beginning of the semester**, to get this step done.

The final form that allows you to graduate is called “Form M-3 - Report of the Master’s Examining Committee.” The deadline to submit it this semester is **Friday, December 3**. You can check it here: <http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/academics/graduation-commencement/timeline-deadlines/>. All members of your Master’s Committee must sign Form M-3 before it is submitted , so **\*\*your\*\*** deadline is earlier (see below).

## PROCEDURE TO SUBMIT FORM M-3

Note: you only submit Form M-3 in the semester you graduate. This is often the semester in which you take Econ 8413, but there are exceptions. If you expect to graduate in a future semester, follow the procedure below *during the semester in which you expect to graduate* (but still email me your paper to be graded in Econ 8413).

- Sometime before **Friday, November 19**, download “Form M-3: Report of the Master’s Examining Committee”: <https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m3-report-of-the-masters-examining-committee/>. Fill in the top part, including your paper title (if in doubt, discuss with me) and send it as an email attachment to the Graduate Administrative Assistant.
- They will check all the information and email the form to your committee for approval.
- Also submit your paper by **Friday, November 19**. Note: send me your paper as an email attachment. Do not send your paper to the whole committee. I will do that once I approve your paper.
- Once your committee approves your paper and signs your Form M-3, the department will submit the signed form to the Graduate School.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person’s work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

## ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES

Students with Disabilities:

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please establish an accommodation plan with the [MU Disability Center](#), S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on “Disability Resources” on the MU homepage.

## INTELLECTUAL PLURALISM

The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the departmental chair or divisional director; the director of the [Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities](#); the [MU Equity Office](#), or [equity@missouri.edu](mailto:equity@missouri.edu).

All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.

## ACADEMIC INQUIRY, COURSE DISCUSSION, AND PRIVACY

University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in Section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may make audio or video recordings of course activity unless specifically prohibited by the faculty member. However, the redistribution of audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course is prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of [section 200.020](#) of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

## TITLE IX

University of Missouri policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, genetic information, disability and protected veteran status. Discrimination includes any form of unequal treatment such as denial of opportunities, harassment, and violence. Sex-based violence includes rape, sexual assault, unwanted touching, stalking, dating/interpersonal violence, and sexual exploitation.

If you experience discrimination, you are encouraged (but not required) to report the incident to the MU Office for Civil Rights & Title IX. Learn more about your rights and options at [civilrights.missouri.edu](http://civilrights.missouri.edu) or call 573-882-3880. You also may make an anonymous report online.

Students may also contact the Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Center, a confidential resource, for advocacy and other support related to rape or power-based personal violence at [rsvp@missouri.edu](mailto:rsvp@missouri.edu) or 573-882-6638, or go to [rsvp.missouri.edu](http://rsvp.missouri.edu).

Both the [Office for Civil Rights & Title IX](#) and the [RSVP Center](#) can provide assistance to students who need help with academics, housing, or other issues.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Week / Day	PURPOSE	REQUIREMENT
Week 1	<b>Introduction to the class.</b> How to find a paper to base your research on. How to write a good economics paper.	None.
Week 1	<b>Introduction to STATA.</b> A hand-out will be provided with an introduction to STATA, along with an example dataset.	None, but you should practice STATA with the provided dataset, if you're not familiar with it.
Monday, September 13	<b>Idea presentation.</b> This is where you will tell me and your colleagues what you will be working on. For most students this means: what paper you will replicate. Describe the main questions of the paper, and its data.	Post 1-3 paragraphs on the relevant discussion board thread by this date.
Monday, October 11	<b>Progress report.</b> This is still a somewhat informal presentation. Discuss how much progress you've made. Attempt to have a literature review and a full presentation of the data. But you may also already have some preliminary results. If you are having problems with your data or estimation, this is also an opportunity to discuss it.	You have the choice: do an actual presentation, to me, via Zoom, at an arranged time. Or post in the relevant discussion board thread. You must do either by this date.
Friday, November 19	<b>Final paper due.</b>	As explained above, I may try to organize formal presentations around this time. But your paper itself is due on this date.