

# ECON 604 - Fall 2025

## Research Seminar in Economics

Instructor: Dr. James Saunoris      Class: Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 9:10 p.m.  
Office: 703F Pray-Harrold      Class Website: <https://canvas.emich.edu/>  
E-mail: jsaunori@emich.edu      Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.  
Office Phone: (734) 487-3068      and by appointment

*“I hear, and I forget; I see, and I remember; I do, and I understand.”*

*-An old Chinese proverb*

### **Catalog Course Description:**

“Examines selected issues of research methodology, procedures and techniques. Students conduct individual research projects, present their findings in a seminar format and submit a research paper. Prerequisite: ECON 514 Econometric Analysis.”

Note that ECON 604 is considered a “capstone” course in which your graduate studies culminate in completion of a professional quality research project. For this reason, the course should be taken in or shortly before the last semester of your graduate program.

### **Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to create a collaborative forum that develops student’s expertise in research methodologies, procedures, and techniques needed to conduct original research on important behavioral and policy questions in economics. The primary assignments for this course include preparing a research proposal, reviewing prior research on a topic, formulating economic hypotheses to be tested in your research, collecting relevant data, empirically testing the hypotheses, communicating results orally and in writing, and professionally critiquing another economist’s research in writing. The course will include a limited amount of lecture on important research tools, but will focus more on a seminar format where you present your research through its various stages and solicit feedback and suggestions from your peers including me. In the end, each student should have completed a high quality, original economics research project which provides important findings to the economics profession and society as a whole. This is your final step in the EMU Master’s program at becoming an economist.

**Prerequisites:** ECON 514, or equivalent

### **Course Lectures & Reading Material**

The beginning of the course will be lecture-based and closely follow Greenlaw’s textbook:

*Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research* (1st edition) by Steven A. Greenlaw.

This book provides an extensive overview of the research process in the field of economics. I will post detailed lecture notes on Canvas prior to class.

Other good resources for writing an economics paper include the following:

1. *A Guide to Writing in Economics*. by Dudenhefer, Paul, Duke University, December 2009.
2. *Writing Economics*. by Neugeboren, Robert, Harvard University, 2001.
3. *The Economist's Handbook: A Research and Writing Guide* (2nd edition) by Thomas Wyrick.
4. *Economical Writing* (2nd edition) by Deirdre McCloskey.
5. *The Elements of Style* (4th edition) by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White.
6. *A Guide for the Young Economist* (2nd edition) by William Thomson.

These books or papers are available on Canvas or in my office for you to borrow.

Throughout the semester you will read several scholarly papers. While reading these papers take note of the structure of the paper, writing style, layout, sentence structure, tone, etc. This will help you learn how to properly write an economics research paper. I also take plagiarism very seriously. I reserve the right to utilize specialized software to check for evidence of plagiarism.

## **Empirical Research Project**

The goal of the empirical research project is for you to develop an understanding of how economists conduct applied empirical research. The project is intended for you to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of statistical software syntax (e.g. Stata, R, SAS, etc.), data management skills, and best coding and documentation practices for reproducibility;
2. Demonstrate the ability to place a research question in the context of existing scholarly discourse through an effective literature review;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the necessary components of a well-written empirical research paper and the economics discipline formatting and style conventions;
4. Be able to provide a critical and helpful assessment of other's work and;
5. Demonstrate the ability to present your research orally to a given audience.

Below includes a brief description of each component of the project:

### **1. Annotated Bibliography**

The annotated bibliography assignment is a precursor to the proposal. The purpose of this assignment is for you to familiarize yourself with the previous literature and start to place your research in context. You will begin by collecting a list of sources and then provide a summary, assessment and reflection of each paper.

### **2. Research Proposal**

For the research proposal you will explain your paper topic and motivate interest in the project with some of the key affects you will study. The goal of this assignment is to begin writing parts of what may become the introduction and motivation for your final paper.

### 3. **Data Collection & Metadata Guide**

The data collection & metadata guide assignment entails the completion and submission of several data and replication documentation components, including: the original data, importable data, base data files, metadata guide and data processing command files. The purpose of this assignment is to easily replicate the data file used for the analysis.

### 4. **The Literature Review**

The literature review includes at least five peer-reviewed sources that is intended to motivate your research question, place it in the context of previous work, and provide a foundation for your analysis. Much of your time will be spent analyzing each paper and how each paper fits together within the literature review that will ultimately lay the foundation for your research.

### 5. **Data & Methods**

The Data & Methods phase of the project entails the completion and submission of five components, including: Data and Methods (i.e. the conceptual or theoretical framework, data and summary statistics, and model specification), Data construction command file, Analysis data file in the statistical software format, Data Appendix, Data summary command file.

### 6. **Results & Conclusions**

This phase of the project entails the completion and submission of the results and discussion and your data analysis command file. The results and discussions will become the results and discussion section of your final paper. The analysis command file is the code that produces all empirical results presented in the Results section, using your data file that you built during data construction.

### 7. **Research Compilation**

At this point in the semester, you will have completed several parts of the final research paper, as outlined above. You will compile each project into a final paper. This final phase of the empirical research project entails the submission of the 1) final empirical research paper and 2) a final clean set of replication documentation folders.

### 8. **Research Presentation**

For this assignment you will give an oral presentation of your paper to the class. Presenters will be given 8-10 minutes to present their research using PowerPoint.

### **Use of Generative AI:**

In this course, you are welcome—and encouraged—to use generative AI tools (e.g., Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, DALL·E, Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, GitHub Copilot, etc.) to assist with your research and writing. However, appropriate documentation of AI use is required: if you use an AI model, you must clearly acknowledge its contribution in your submission. Students should also recognize the limitations of these tools: large language models may generate inaccurate information or fabricated citations, code-generation models may produce faulty outputs, and image-generation models can sometimes create inappropriate content. You are fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and professionalism of any work you submit, regardless of whether it was assisted by AI. The university's policies on plagiarism and academic honesty continue to apply.

## Important Dates & Point Allocations

Due Date	Description*	% of Grade
September 20	Annotated Bibliography	2%
October 04	Research Proposal	2%
October 18	Data Collection & Metadata Guide*	2%
November 01	Literature Review	2%
November 15	Data & Methods*	2%
November 29	Results & Discussion*	2%
December 10	Research Presentation	8%
December 13	Final Research Paper	80%

\*denotes that data (.xlsx, .dta, etc.) files and/or command (.do, etc.) files are due at this stage also.

\*\*You do not receive credit for late assignments. Specific to the final paper, I will deduct 20% for each day the paper is late.

## Grading Scale

The grading scale for the course is as follows:

A.....93-100%	C+.....76-79%
A-.....90-92%	C.....73-75%
B+.....86-89%	C-.....70-72%
B.....83-85%	F.....0-69%
B-.....80-82%	

## Canvas

Canvas, EMU's learning management system, is integral to the course and will be used extensively. You will use Canvas to access necessary course files, turn in assignments, communicate with me, receive announcements, and keep track of your grades. You must be able to access the Canvas course page to complete this course. If you are having problems using Canvas, please refer to the following link for help: <https://www.emich.edu/elearning/support/index.php>

## Classroom Conduct

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. Views may differ on what counts as rudeness or courtesy. If you are not sure what constitutes good conduct in this classroom, ask the instructor. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

Students are expected to adhere to the standards and expectations detailed in the [Student Handbook](#). In addition, cell phones, side conversations, tardiness, foul language, and the use of open laptops and ipads/tablets for purposes other than for class will not be tolerated. These are very disruptive to students and if the problem persists I will ask you to leave. If you are caught cheating I will give you a zero for that assignment/exam. If the problem persists I will take further action.

## University Policies

In addition to the articulated course specific policies and expectations, students are responsible for understanding all applicable University guidelines, policies, and procedures. For resources related to staying healthy [Click Here](#). The [EMU Student Handbook](#) is the primary resource provided to students to ensure that they have access to all University policies, support resources, and students' rights and responsibilities. Changes may be made to the EMU Student Handbook whenever necessary, and shall be effective immediately, and/or as of the date on which a policy is formally adopted, and/or on the date specified in the amendment. Please note: Electing not to access the link provided below does not absolve a student of responsibility.

For questions about any university policy, procedure, practice, or resource, please contact the Office of the Ombuds: 248 Student Center, (734) 487-0074, [emu.ombuds@emich.edu](mailto:emu.ombuds@emich.edu), or visit the website: <http://www.emich.edu/ombuds>

University course policies link: <http://www.emich.edu/studenthandbook/policies/academic.phpuniv>

## Disability Concerns

I am dedicated to creating an accessible, inclusive, and inviting learning environment for all students, including those who may have disabilities that could impact their participation in this class. If you believe you may have trouble participating or effectively demonstrating learning in this course, please contact me (with or without an accommodation letter from the [Disability Resource Center](#)) to discuss reasonable accommodations. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (250 Student Center; (734) 487-2470; [drc@emich.edu](mailto:drc@emich.edu)). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a letter of accommodation (LOA). Please present your LOA to me at the start of the academic semester or once it has been distributed to you by the DRC. You are welcome to contact me at any point in the semester about such issues, but it is best if we can talk at least one week prior to the need for any modifications.

## University Writing Center

The [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#) offers writing support to all EMU undergraduate and graduate students. In doing so, they value the diversity of our campus and honor all students and the languages they bring with them to the university. The UWC offers three types of support, each of which provides students with focused feedback and with strategies for the development of ideas and for revision.

## Holman Success Center

The [Holman Success Center](#) provides Academic Support (including tutoring) through a variety of virtual and in-person services.

## University Library

Library research support is available to all students. This includes getting started with research, identifying sources to search, developing search strategies, evaluating resources, and more. See <https://www.emich.edu/library/help/ask.php> for all of the ways in which you can get help with research, including both in-person and remotely through online chat and appointments with librarians.

## **Sexual Misconduct Prevention Response Office (formerly Title IX Office)**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex under any education program or activity receiving federal financial aid. Sexual assault and sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX. This office is located in the Student Center Suite 250 and their contact information is (734) 487-9126 and [emu\\_titleix\\_office@emich.edu](mailto:emu_titleix_office@emich.edu). For more information follow this link:

[What you need to know about Title IX.](#)

## **Student and Exchange Visitor Statement (SEVIS)**

The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires F and J students to report numerous items to the [Office of International Students & Scholars \(OISS\)](#).

## **International Student Resource Center**

[International Student Resource Center](#) (200 Alexander Building) is a service of the World Languages Department for EMU students who need help with their non-native English language for academic assignments. Help is provided for reading and comprehension, listening and note-taking, improvement of grammatical accuracy, compositions, study skills, and conversation. Note, this is not the Office of International Students.

## **Graduate Research Conference (GRC)**

I encourage students to participate in the **Graduate Research Conference (GRC)** in the winter semester. This gives students a chance to present their research to other interested students and faculty members. These skills help when applying for jobs and Ph.D. programs. For more information on the GRC follow this link:

[http://www.emich.edu/graduate/news\\_events/research\\_conf/index.php](http://www.emich.edu/graduate/news_events/research_conf/index.php).

## **Graduate School Scholarships**

The graduate school offers a number of opportunities to receive funding for graduate research. For more information follow this link:

<https://www.emich.edu/graduate/scholarships-aid/scholarships-fellowships/graduate-school-scholarships.php>.

## **CAS Scholarships and Awards**

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) offers several [scholarships](#) for graduate students. They also offer the [CAS Student Emergency Fund](#) that assists currently enrolled CAS students by providing financial support to meet unexpected emergency expenses.

This is a hybrid course that will meet face-to-face on Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. until 9:10 p.m. for the first half of the semester (October 10th is the last face-to-face meeting). During the face-to-face meetings I will lecture on the research process following the topics below. During the remaining part of the semester you will work independently on your research project and consult with me on a weekly basis.

## **Course Schedule**

**August 27, 2025** - Lecture 1: Overview of the Research Process in Economics;  
Workshop: ECON 604 Demo Replication Project

**September 3, 2025** - Lecture 2: Surveying the Literature on a Topic in Economics;  
Workshop: Searching the Literature

**September 10, 2025** - Lecture 3: Writing As a Tool and Product of Economic Research;  
Workshop: Faculty Presentations

**September 17, 2025** - Lecture 4: Theorizing or Conceptualizing the Research;  
Workshop: Best R Coding Practices

**September 24, 2025** - Lecture 5: Locating and Collecting Economic Data;  
Workshop: Finding Data

**October 1, 2025** - Lecture 6: Creating a Valid Research Design and Testing the Research Hypothesis;  
Workshop: Cleaning Data

**October 8, 2025** - Lecture 7: Communicating the Results of the Research Project  
Workshop: How to Use Large Language Models (LLM) for Economic Research