Course Syllabus

**Introduction to Research Methods**

ECON 4970

Fall Semester 2013

Meeting Times

Tuesday 12 pm – 12:50 pm

***Meeting Place***:

WB 103

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| Name of Instructor | Dr. Doris Geide-Stevenson |
| *Office*: | WB 232 |
| *Phone*: | (801) 626-7634 |
| *E-mail*: | dgsteven@weber.edu |
| *Course  Websites* | <https://weber.instructure.com/login> |
| *Office hours*: | Tuesday:      10:30am – 11 am  Wednesday:   9:30am – 12:00pm  Thursday:     10:30am – 12:30pm  Or by appointment |

***Course Communication***

It will be common for the instructor to send e-mails to the class regarding assignments and schedule changes. The instructors will use the student Gmail accounts set up by Weber State University. It is the student’s responsibility to check his or her Weber State e-mail several times per week or forward to another account.

**Course Description**

This one-credit hour course introduces you to doing original research in economics. Over the course of this semester you should identify the research question that you will work on during Spring 2014 when you are enrolled in ECON 4980.

Required Text

Greenlaw, Steven A., *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research* (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 2006); ISBN: 0-618-379835.

Other required readings, for example excerpts from economics textbooks, will be posted on the course website in Canvas.

Useful Reference Texts

(1) McCloskey, D. N., Economic Writing, 2nd Edition (Waveland Press, Inc.: Long Grove, IL, 2000). ISBN: 1-57766-063-3.

(2) *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, 14th Edition (University of Chicago Press, 1993). ISBN 0226103897.  In addition, an writing reference is recommended.

(3) Others: economics textbooks; other texts in statistics, calculus, mathematical economics, and econometrics. Many of these texts can be secured from the university library.

*University Resource:*

[Office of Undergraduate Research](http://www.weber.edu/OUR/grants):  The WSU office of undergraduate website explains what types of grants are available, specifies grant deadlines, and provides useful tips for a successful grant proposal.

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| Writing Assignments | 75% |
| Class Attendance | 25% |
| Grading Scale | |
| A | 90% and above |
| B | 80% - 90% |
| C | 70% - 80% |
| D | 60% - 70% |
| E | 60% and below |

Academic Dishonesty

Students are encouraged to consult with other classmates when working on homework problems unless otherwise directed by the instructors. However, each student must submit individual homework assignments for grading unless otherwise noted. Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable and are considered a serious breach of university policy. Students found to cheat or plagiarize will receive a grade of E for the class. Please refer to the WSU Student Code (see <http://documents.weber.edu/ppm/6-22.htm> under part D in section IV).

***Services for Students with Disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act)***

If you have special needs, it is your responsibility to contact one of the instructors during the first week of classes. [Services for Students with Disabilities](http://weber.edu/ssd)(SSD) in room 181 of the StudentServicesCenter (phone: 626-6413) will coordinate reasonable accommodations.

***Emergency Planning***

In the event of an extended campus closure due to natural disaster, epidemic, or other event, I will continue to provide instruction via the Canvas learning management system. I will provide text-based mini-lectures (narratives, slides, and/or presentations) which correspond to the material covered each class period and will expect you to login to the system on a regular basis to keep up with course work and to receive instruction. Assignments will continue to be turned in through Canvas according to due dates listed on the syllabus and schedule. Within Canvas, online discussions & collaborations will be made available to allow you to interact with other students and me about course material. I will check email (Campus and within the Canvas course) on a regular basis should you need to communicate with me personally. The severity of the "event" and impact on human life, communication lines, etc, will determine the extent that we can continue classes.

***Departmental Learning Outcomes***

1. Economics majors will be numerically literate, and possess strong written and oral communication skills.
2. All Economics majors should be able to use statistical methods for problem solving (e.g., hypothesis testing, regression analysis).

***Course Schedule***

(The instructors will make adjustments to the schedule throughout the semester as needed).

8/27:    Course Overview: Discussion of syllabus, requirements, and expectations

                        Fields in economics

                        Discussion of previous projects

                        How to be successful in research

9/3       Discussion of readings on labor market discrimination.

             Development of research questions.

9/10:    Discussion of scientific method (examples of use of scientific method in economics)  What is a good research question?

9/17     Literature Survey and Critical Reading

9/24     Discussion of assignments – Journal of Economic Perspectives – Topics in Economics

10/1:    Theorizing the research

10/8:    Designing a research project based on popular literature

10/15:  Exogenous and endogenous variables

10/22:  Understanding descriptive statistics

                        Causation vs. Correlation

                        Linear regression

11/29:  Multiple regression model

11/5:    Multiple regression model

11/12:  Discussion of Research Proposal

11/19: Discussion of how to present research in economics – Data sets

11/26:  Discussion of Regression Assignment

12/3:    Proposal Presentations

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| Due Date: | Assignment due (to be handed in at the beginning of class) |
| 9/3 | **Read:** Excerpt from Ehrenberg/Smith, Modern Labor Economics, Theories of  Market Discrimination, p. 394 – 404 (included in the readings module) and List/Rasul, Handbook of Labor Economics, Vol. 4a, Chapter 2, Field Experiments in Labor Economics, p. 149 – 156. Chapter 1 and 2 from Greenlaw, ‘Doing Economics’.  **Assignment**: The readings from the field of labor economics can be seen as representing elements of the research process. Use quotes from Ehrenberg/Smith, and List/Rasul to explain how these readings relate to the research process in economics. Use chapter 2 from Greenlaw to make your arguments. Type about 1 page.  **Be prepared:** To share your writing and to explain each theory of market discrimination introduced by Ehrenberg/Smith. |
| 9/10 | **Read:** Chapter 3 in Greenlaw, ‘Doing Economics’,  **Assignment:**  **1. Find one scholarly article and one popular article on labor market discrimination. Print out each article and list the two articles in a bibliography.**  **a. Use one of the library databases to search for the scholarly article. Carefully document your search strategy as described in chapter 3 (Greenlaw).**  **b. For the scholarly article, find the research question that the author is asking.**  **c. For the popular article, think of a research question to study the issue described in your article.**  **2. Suppose that MRP = 20 – 0.5L for left-handed workers, where L =  the number of left-handed workers and MRP is measured in dollars per hour. The going wage for left-handed workers is $10 per hour, but employer A discriminates against these workers and has a discrimination coefficient, D, of $2 per hour. Graph the MRP curve and show how many left-handed workers employer A hires. How much profit has employer A lost by discriminating?** |
| 9/17 | Read: Chapter 7 from Doing Economics  **Assignment:**  **1.**Complete Exercise 1 from p. 25 in Greenlaw, Doing Economics.  **2.**The *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (available in the Print Holdings of the Library and on ECONLit) covers various economic topics in the format of a symposium which includes a number of academic articles on a specific topic. Go to the library and search the Journal of Economic Perspectives from 1980 – 2013 and identify **10 symposia topics** that you find the most interesting. **Hand in**: List of symposia topics and the journal (e.g. Journal of Economic Perspectives, Spring 1998, Volume 12, Number 2). **Be prepared:** to talk about one topic. |
| 9/24 | **Read: Chapter 6, Greenlaw**  **Assignment:**  **1. Find a NEW, scholarly article on labor market discrimination.**  **a. Carefully document your search strategy (based on your reading of Greenlaw).  b. Write down the research question in the article?  c. Identify the economic theory that your study applies to its research question. Make sure you provide specific quotes from the article that demonstrate the theory used. What is the  hypothesis provided for your research question (make sure you understand the concept of a hypothesis from chapter 7 in Greenlaw).   2. Find another scholarly article on a topic of your choice.  a. State the topic and identify and describe the search strategy. b. State the research question. c. Identify the economic theory that your study applies to its research question. Make sure you provide specific quotes from the article that demonstrate the theory used. What is the  hypothesis provided for your research question (make sure you understand the concept of a hypothesis from chapter 7 in Greenlaw).**  **Provide the bibliography for the two articles that you are using.** |
| 10/1 | **Hand in:**Identify one article from the Journal of Economic Perspectives. Carefully read the article and answer all the questions from Table 6.1 for your article. At the top of your written and typed assignment (double-spaced, 1 inch margin, 12 point font) you should provide the complete citation (journal title, article title, author, volume, number, month, year, page numbers.) Make sure you post the article of your choice in the Discussion by Saturday, Oct. 1.    Example:  Swanson, C. E., Kopecky, K. J. and Tucker, A. (1997), “Technology Adoption over the Life Cycle and Aggregate Technological Progress,” *Southern Economic Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (April), pp. 872-887.  Repeat the questions from Table 6.1. and provide your answers in the same format as shown on p. 110 – 112 in the Greenlaw book. |
| 10/8 | **Read:** Chapter 7 on Theorizing or Conceptualizing Research (Greenlaw). Handbook of Labor Economics, List/Razul p. 161 - 165, 169 - 177.  1. Complete Exercise 1 (p. 137) from chapter 7.  2. State a Research Topic (see Greenlaw book for definition) that you are interested in for your semester project.  b. Find two research papers that relate to your research topic. For each paper, (I.) state the research question and (ii.) Identify the economic theory that is applied to the paper/study. (iii.) Briefly (one paragraph) describe the economic theory. |
| 10/15 | **Hand in**: Based on the newspaper article "Campus digs sow seeds of success" from July 14, 2013 in the Salt Lake Tribune, identify  1. A research question that focuses on individual students to study the issue described in the article.  2. Access the *Journal of Economic Education* through the library databases to find at least 2 articles that use economic theory to study your research question from 1. Provide bibliographic information for the articles you consulted and describe how the articles relate to your research question.  3. Describe the economic theory applicable to your research question.  4. Describe how you would collect data for an empirical analysis of your research question.  **Read**: Chapter 8, Greenlaw, Locating and collecting economic data. |
| 10/21 | Read: Chapter 9, Greenlaw, Putting Together Your Data Set  **Assignment**: 1. Access the [2013 Economic Report of the President](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cea/economic-report-of-the-President/2013). Compile a data set on annual consumer spending in the United States (1960 - 2012) and data on annual real GDP in the United States (1960-2012). Put the data in a spreadsheet and explain how you addressed the data issues discussed in Greenlaw.  Finally, with the data on C and RGDP, run a simple regression using MINITAB. Print out the regression analysis and bring the results to class next time.  2. Describe a possible research project and the type of data you might need for your project. How would you gather the data? Explain. |
| 10/28 | **Read:** Chapter 10 from “Doing Economics”.  Identify \_\_\_ additional articles from the Journal of Economic Perspectives or another academic economics journal. All articles should relate to the same topic and help you in identifying a research question. Carefully read the articles and answer all the questions from Table 6.1 for your articles. **Be prepared:** to discuss the topic of your choice. |
| 11/5 | **Read:** Chapter 11 from “Doing Economics”. |
| 11/12 | Read: Chapter 9 from “Doing Economics”. |
| 11/19 |  |
| 11/26 | **Hand in:** Regression Assignment |
| 12/3 | Research Proposals due: Write a 2 page research proposal. Describe the background, define a research questions, identify a theoretical framework to discuss your question, describe the method to answer your question. In addition to the 2 page proposal, identify at least 3 research papers that will help you address your topic. List those papers in a bibliography. |
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