

Econ 701 /702: Senior Thesis Workshop

SYLLABUS, WINTER-SPRING 2026

Instructor	Caitlin Myers Office: WNS 309 Email: cmyers@middlebury.edu
Overview	The senior research workshop is composed of no more than eight students working independently on research projects during winter and spring terms. Each student will meet frequently with the instructor to discuss his or her project. In addition, the class will sometimes meet collectively for lectures on common issues and to allow students to present and discuss their research.
Class Meetings	During Winter Term, class meetings are scheduled TWR 1-4pm in WNS 100. During Spring Term, class meetings are scheduled M 7:30-10:25pm in WNS 100. We will use some (not all) of the scheduled times for lectures providing broadly applicable information to the class and for student presentations and discussions about projects as they progress. The syllabus provides dates I expect to use our class meeting times, though it is possible that I will schedule additional meetings (with notice) if the need arises.
Individual Meetings	<p>You are expected to schedule a 30-minute individual meeting with me each week. You may occasionally wish to skip a week or to schedule additional time in a week. Both are fine but aim for an average of 30 minutes over the course of the semester.</p> <p>Go here to schedule appointments at least 8 hours in advance of the desired meeting time: You can sign up for meetings here. When you schedule, you will have an option to select either a Zoom meeting or an in-person meeting in my office.</p>
Office hours	Office hours are by appointment using the individual meeting time slots described above.
Textbooks	William Strunk and E.B. White. The Elements of Style. Pearson. Any edition is fine. Deirdre McCloskey. Economical Writing. Any edition is fine.
Software	<p>We will use the statistical software package Stata (v 19.0). Students can access Stata in campus computing labs and/or by installing Stata for free on their personal computers. While you are welcome to work in labs outside of class, you will also need to be able to access Stata on a personal laptop during class.</p> <p>In addition to Stata, you also will need to use your Middlebury Google account If you wish to use a different statistical software package, please discuss this with me first.</p> <p>I prefer that you use Microsoft Word and Excel to prepare all drafts of your research paper. In my experience, the Office Suite provides the best formatting options for empirical research papers as well as the best track changes/commenting options for me to provide you with feedback. If you wish to use different software, such as the Google Suite or LaTeX, please discuss with me first.</p>

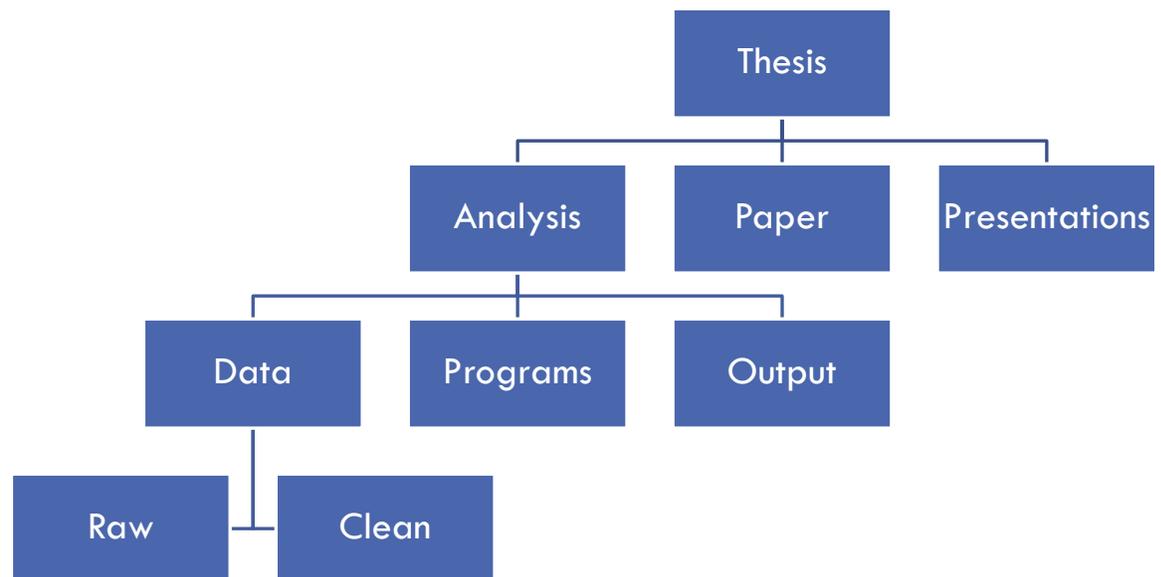
Platforms

The entirety of both terms of our course is hosted under the Econ 701C course page on Canvas. Here you will find links to videos, readings, short quizzes, assignments, announcements, and grades. In addition, you can access the calendar for our course, which includes all scheduled meetings of the entire class and assignment due dates. If you use a web calendar, you can import the feed for this calendar. (Please be sure you set it to update so that any changes I might make will appear in your calendar.)

Files

File organization, back-up and sharing practices are essential to a successful thesis project. All students must use OneDrive or Google Drive cloud storage using their Middlebury account to ensure their work will be backed up and protected from hard drive failures.

In either location, create a folder for your thesis and establish the following folder hierarchy.



Funding

Some projects may require funding to purchase data or administer lab or field experiments. If you anticipate that you will require funding, please discuss this with me as early as possible during the research process. The Undergraduate Research Office (URO) administers the senior research project supplement fund. Applications for amounts up to \$1200 are due by January 24, 2026 or April 15, 2026. The URO also accepts applications for amounts up to \$350 on a rolling basis, funds permitting. For more information see go/URO.

IRB

If your research project will involve original work with human subjects such as implementing lab or field experiments, you likely will need to apply to receive permission from the IRB before proceeding. You must plan well in advance for this as the process can take up to a month, and occasionally even longer. See go/IRB.

Assessment

The senior research workshop spans two terms. At the end of the first term, you will receive a "placeholder" grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. At the end of the second term, you will receive a letter grade that will be applied to both terms. (That is, your "placeholder" grade from the previous term will be converted to the same letter grade that you received for the second term.) Your overall GPA will be based on the two (identical) letter grades. Your Economics major GPA will use the letter grade only once. Assessment is based on the following components:

Participation (10%) Class participation consists of attendance, preparation for class and individual meetings, level of involvement in class, and your work as a referee. You should come to each meeting with a list of questions/issues to address, take notes during the meeting, and maintain notes and lists of goals and accomplishments. Short quizzes designed to measure

engagement are posted on Canvas and factored into your participation grade. Any other assignments that are not otherwise assigned to a grading category will be factored in to class participation.

Presentations (20%) In total, there are four presentations for this course. You will make one 15-minute presentation of your work near the end of winter term and two 15-minute presentations during spring term. The first presentation motivates and clearly defines your research question and research design. The second presentation summarizes your findings. In addition, you will prepare and present the final version of your work in May in a format to be determined.

Drafts (20%) Intermediate products, generally drafts of some of the sections of your paper, are due throughout the two terms. Each product will be weighted equally.

Final paper (50%) A research paper based on your project is due at the end of the spring term. The paper should be submitted to your advisor by uploading the document as a PDF to Canvas.

Late assignments

Late assignments will receive a grade deduction of 5 points per day they are late, beginning with the day they were due. Exceptions may be granted for requests received at least 24 hours prior to the due date.

Grading scale

A	95 to 100%
A-	90 to 94.9%
B+	87 to 89.9%
B	84 to 86.9%
B-	80 to 83.9%
C+	77 to 79.9%
C	74 to 76.9%
C-	70 to 73.9%
D	60 to 69.9%
F	<60%

Honors

This workshop is the path to departmental honors. To graduate with Honors, a student must receive at least an A- in Econ 701/702 and a GPA of at least 3.5 in all economics courses. High Honors requires an A in Econ 701/702 and a GPA of 3.75 or more, and Highest Honors an A in Econ 701/702 and a GPA of 3.90 or more.

Honor code

Intellectual honesty and respect for other's words and ideas are core values of your professor, the college, and the broader academic community. You can and should base your research on the existing literature, and you can and should talk to professors, students, friends, and family about your work. Be vigilant, however, in recognizing the difference between your thoughts, results, and writing (your contribution to knowledge) and the contributions of others. Directly copying someone else's work, ideas or results without attribution is an Honor Code violation that I take very seriously and that will have serious consequences. You must sign the Honor Code on all assignments and your final paper.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, including machine learning models, automated research tools, and large language models (LLMs), are increasingly available and offer various applications in academic settings. While these tools can assist in the learning process, you must use them responsibly to uphold academic integrity. This policy outlines the acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI tools for assignments in this course.

Acceptable uses of AI

Coding help: Using AI to help figure out a tricky bit of code.

Idea Generation: Using AI to brainstorm ideas for topics, theses, or arguments.

Research Assistance: Utilizing AI to identify and/or summarize articles, papers, or datasets that will be further examined and cited.

Drafting Aid: Leveraging AI to help outline or draft parts of an assignment, provided that the content is significantly revised and meets the assignment's originality requirements.

Grammar and Style Checks: Employing AI tools for editing and proofreading.
Translation Services: Utilizing AI for basic translation needs when dealing with sources in foreign languages, followed by appropriate citation.

Unacceptable uses of AI

Plagiarism: Submitting text generated by AI without proper citation or presenting it as your own original work.

Full Assignment Generation: Using AI to produce entire assignments or significant portions thereof without substantive original contribution.

Penalties for Misuse

Misuse of AI tools will be considered a violation of the honor code.

Disclosure

If you use AI tools in an assignment, you must disclose this fact in your submission. A simple statement such as "[Name of AI tools] were used for initial drafting, research summarization, and grammar checks" will suffice.

Final Notes

Because AI technologies are evolving rapidly, the course AI policy is subject to change. Any alterations will be communicated to the students in class and via email.

Accessibility Services

If you require additional accommodations sanctioned by the Student Disability Resource Center, please submit your letter within the first week of class or immediately upon receiving it. I will be happy to work with you to make this course accessible.

Mark your calendar

The following provides dates for scheduled class meetings and assignments. Note that smaller participation assignments may be added on Canvas, with appropriate notice.

	Date	Topic	Assignment
Winter Term	1/6	How to select a thesis topic	Watch How to select a thesis topic Read Angrist and Pischke. 2010. " The Credibility Revolution " Complete associated quiz on Canvas.
	1/7	Methods Crash Course, Part 1: Regression review Methods Crash Course, Part 2: Difference-in-differences estimation	Watch Mostly Intuitive Multiple Regression Complete Participation Assignment
	1/8	Methods Crash Course, Part 2 continued: Difference-in-differences estimation	Skim (~60 minutes) Dench et al., 2025. "The Road Not Taken"
	1/13	Methods Crash Course, Part 3: Instrumental variables estimation Methods Crash Course, Part 4: Regression discontinuity design	Skim (~60 minutes) Madestam et al. 2013. "Do Political Protests Matter?" Skim (~60 minutes) Carpenter and Dobkin. 2009. "The Effect of Alcohol Consumption on Mortality: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from the Minimum Drinking Age." Complete participation assignment
	1/14	No class	
	1/15	Thesis Pitch Structure of a thesis Writing an introduction	Read: Chapters III and V of Strunk & White "The Elements of Style"
	1/20	No class	
	1/21	Introduction workshop	Read: All of McCloskey "Economical Writing" Participation: Bring draft of introduction to class to exchange with classmate
	1/22	Scott Cunningham visit! (note change from prior schedule)	TBD
1/27	Student presentations	Presentation 1	

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	1/28	Student presentations	
	1/29	(No class)	Submit: Introduction and Literature Review
Spring Term	2/9	What's next? Wrangling and describing data	
	3/9	Student presentations	Data visualization
	3/13	(No class)	Draft introduction and literature review + data description (Draft)
	4/20	Student presentations	Presentation 3 (Either present at Spring Symposium on 4/17 or in class on 4/20)
	4/24	(No class)	Complete draft due
	5/1	(No class)	Referee report due
	5/11	Poster session	Presentation 4: Poster Session (Date is Tentative and will be confirmed)
	5/13	(No class)	Thesis Due