
University of Alberta – Department of Economics – Winter 2023
ECON 591 – Graduate Research Workshop I – Marchand

COURSE OUTLINE

Website

<https://sites.ualberta.ca/~jmarchan/teaching.htm>

Class Hours

Friday
Tory B-104: 12:00 – 2:50 PM

Instructor

Joseph Marchand
jmarchan@ualberta.ca

Description

Graduate Research Workshop I (ECON 591) at the University of Alberta serves as a doctoral-level course that establishes the skills necessary for students in the second year of their PhD to conduct independent empirical research in economics toward publication.

Its purpose is for you to fully begin your fruitful production pipeline of research in economics for your job market and beyond. The course will aid students in their paper writing and presentation skills, as well as in the profession and promotion of research.

All enrolled students are expected to actively participate, present, and produce research. This course is restricted to second (and sometimes third) year PhD graduate students.

Resources

There are no specific materials for this course. However, nine handouts will be provided.

Evaluation

Your numerical grade for the course will be calculated using the following weights:

25.0%	Active Workshop Participation	(every January to March workshop)
25.0%	Portfolios of Previous Research	(due / shown in January workshops)
25.0%	Presentations of New Research	(each February to March workshop)
25.0%	Research as a Publishable Paper	(due to me by email on April 14 th)

Your letter grade is then determined based on your absolute and relative performance to the rest of the class, with a historical grade point average of ~ 3.5 out of 4.0 (~A–/B+).

An A minus in any of my courses is the bare minimum requirement for a recommendation letter from me, but it does not guarantee it. I will no longer make exceptions to this rule.

Active class participation is based on: 1) attendance of workshops, 2) contributions made during workshops, and 3) attendance of economics seminars (especially job market talks). Treat our time like a language course: we will only use our time to talk about research.

Your research will progress into various products over the semester (from the portfolio, to presentation, to paper form, to a revised presentation, to a revised paper, and so on).

Products

We will begin with your portfolio. Your portfolio will contain all documents regarding: your background, in the form of a CV or resume; your previous research, in the form of all research papers you have previously written and presentations you have ever given; your future contributions, in the form of ideas that you would like to pursue as research; your relevant fields, in the form of JEL and NEP codes and possible committee members. All of these documents will be shown and briefly described during January workshops.

Presentations are your opportunity to defend your research to your peers and instructor. These talks should emulate a department seminar, with questions from your audience. You may begin by pursuing more than one idea, at most two ideas, and we will help you choose the best one to continue with. Presentations will mainly be in person, but at least one could include a virtual format (Zoom). With your permission, we can record at least one of your formal presentations, in order for you to see yourself present and work out any kinks that may be distracting. Potential advisors will attend your final presentation.

Your papers should begin by emulating the form of an economics working paper, such as those from NBER or our very own Department of Economics Working Paper Series. Thus, they should have a typical cover page with title, author name, institution, date, abstract, JEL codes, keywords, and an author footnote with your contact information. The body of the paper should have an introduction, background, data and approach, evidence, conclusion, references, and figures (which may also contain maps) and tables. The paper form of your research will obviously progress from a few pages to a full paper, but the final form of research you hand in should be as close to perfection as possible. The only way to get there is by writing, and rewriting, and rewriting, all semester long.

Papers and presentations will be evaluated through the following research ingredients:

- 1) A clear statement of your research question.
- 2) An explanation of its importance (use numbers).
- 3) A description of the market and/or policy you examine.
- 4) Your synthesis of the relevant literature with references.
- 5) Potential data sources that you can and do use.
- 6) A theoretical explanation of the main relationships.
- 7) Your identifying variation and empirical strategy.
- 8) The visualization of your evidence (figures and tables).
- 9) Your original contribution to the economics literature.

Your software skills should go through rapid improvement as your research progresses. Such software would include paper preparation (LaTeX, LyX, Overleaf, or equivalent), presentation preparation (Beamer, Zoom, or equivalent), and statistical (Stata, R, etc.). However, some students may also find it useful to learn mapping software (ArcView). Grammarly software is also available to help clean up your papers and presentations.

Schedule

January	6 th	Fri	(1)	First Round: Course Outline, Handouts, Overview
	13 th	Fri	(2)	First Round: Transition, Targets, Ingredients
	20 th	Fri	(3)	First Round: Portfolios (#1, #2, #3) (60 min each)
	27 th	Fri	(4)	First Round: Presentations, Papers (homecoming)
February	3 rd	Fri	(5)	Second Round: Presentations (#1, #2, #3) (60 min each)
	10 th	Fri	(6)	Second Round: Papers (#1, #2, #3) (60 min each)
	17 th	Fri	(7)	Third Round: Presentations (#1, #2, #3) (60 min each)
	24 th	Fri	*	No Class (Reading Week)
March	3 rd	Fri	(8)	Third Round: Papers (#1, #2) (120 min each)
	10 th	Fri	(9)	Third Round: Papers (#2, #3) (120 min each)
	17 th	Fri	(10)	Fourth Round: Presentations (#1, #2, #3) (60 min each)
	24 th	Fri	(11)	Fourth Round: Papers (#1, #2, #3) (60 min each)
	31 st	Fri	(12)	Final Round: Presentations (#1, #2, #3) (with advisors)
April	7 th	Fri	*	No Class (Good Friday)
	14 th	Fri	*	(final research papers due by email at the end of the day)
NOTE: Economics seminars are typically on Fridays from 3:30 to 5:00 pm. However, given that we are hiring, job market talks may be any day, from January to April.				

Policies

“Please note that class times for this course will be recorded. Recordings of this course will be used to allow students enrolled in the course to review the material and will be disclosed to other students enrolled in this section of the class. Students have the right to not participate in the recording and are advised to turn off their cameras and audio prior to recording; they can still participate through text-based chat. It is recommended that students remove all identifiable and personal belongings from the space in which they will be participating. Recordings will be made available until the end of term and accessible on [eClass]. Please direct any questions about this collection to the professor of this course.” (If you feel that a lecture should not be posted, then please let me know.)

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the Evaluation Procedures and Grading System section of the University Calendar.” (If there is a problem, let me know ASAP.)

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behavior (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.” (Dean’s office makes decisions.) (<http://www.ualberta.ca/current-students/academic-resources/academic-integrity>)