

ECON 594: Applied Economics

University of British Columbia

[updated May 8, 2026]

Semester: 2026 Summer 1-2
Meetings: Mon, Tues, Wed 10–11:30 am [mostly]
Location: Iona 633

Professor:

Sam Norris
sam.norris@ubc.ca

Office Hours: Thursdays, 8:30am–12:30pm, in 10-minute slots. Office hours on May 21, then weekly from June 4 through August 6 (no office hours July 30). Sign up via the [office hours signup sheet](#).

Teaching Assistant: Uyseok Lee, leeuyseok@gmail.com

TA Office Hours: Mondays 3–5pm and Wednesdays 3–5pm, in Iona 434. Sign up via the [TA office hours signup sheet](#).

Overview & Course Objectives

The aim of this course is to guide students in writing an empirical research paper in economics. The course will largely assume existing knowledge of empirical methods for causal inference (e.g. difference-in-difference) and focus on the craft side of research: where do ideas come from? What makes a good presentation? What makes a compelling figure? What counts as good writing?

The culmination of the class will be an empirical Master’s thesis, using methods typical of applied microeconomics (e.g. labour economics, public economics, development economics, behavioural economics, political economy, industrial organization, international trade, etc.). Students are free to choose the topic of their research paper, provided the paper constitutes an empirical contribution (i.e. uses and analyzes real data).

AI usage and oral examination

I encourage you to use AI in the course of your research. AI can help you speed up your coding, test models, and check your writing. However, you still need to understand the details of your own research. A one-shot Claude paper has no value added to anyone—they could just one-shot the same paper. The successful projects will arise by working together with AI. Your comparative advantage is creativity, big-picture thinking, and analytical clarity. Use it.

To assess your understanding of your own paper, each student will have a 10-minute oral examination on the contents of their paper on August 11th. I’ll ask you questions about why you made certain design and specification decisions, and how you think about the results.

Evaluation

Progress report	20%
Class presentation (and attendance at presentations)	30%
Final paper	50%

Key Dates

Progress report: Upload to Canvas by Wednesday June 3rd midnight.

Student presentations: Students will present a 20-minute preliminary version of their project on June 15/16/17/22/23/24. I will randomly assign students to presentation slots.

Final paper submission: Upload to Canvas by Sunday August 9th midnight. The paper should follow the format of *AER: Insights* (see Guideline section [here](#)). Oral examinations will take place on August 11.

Course Outline

Date	Topic
May 11 (M)	Lecture 1: Introduction and Ideas
May 12 (T)	Lecture 2: How to Use AI
May 13 (W)	Lecture 3: Panel Data and Difference-in-Differences
May 18 (M)	No Class: Victoria Day
May 19 (T)	Lecture 4: Event Study Designs
May 20 (W)	Lecture 5: Tables and Figures
May 25 (M)	Lecture 6: Regression Discontinuity
May 26 (T)	Lecture 7: Instrumental Variables
May 27 (W)	No Class
June 1 (M)	Lecture 8: Measurement Error and Other Empirical Concerns
June 2 (T)	Lecture 9: How to Present
June 3 (W)	Progress Report Due Midnight
June 15 (M)	Presentations
June 16 (T)	Presentations
June 17 (W)	Presentations
June 22 (M)	Presentations
June 23 (T)	Presentations
June 24 (W)	Presentations
June 29 (M)	Lecture 10: How to Write a Paper
Aug 9 (Su)	Final Paper Due Midnight

Concession Policy

Sometimes, things happen during the course of a semester that can affect your ability to succeed. There are three main categories:

- Medical – i.e. you got sick and missed class or a chronic illness got worse
- Compassionate – i.e. a friend or close relative had something bad happen to them, or something bad happened to you
- Conflicting Responsibilities – i.e. something happened in your personal life which is affecting your ability to do the work, like childcare falling through

You can read more about specific examples and the whole policy at:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0>

In all of these cases, UBC's policy is to allow you to request an academic concession. My policy is that all requests for academic concession should be handled through your faculty Advising office (unless your office advises otherwise). This is so that we can centrally track requests for concession and ensure they are fairly administered; it also helps protect your privacy. You can find the procedure here, for Arts:

<https://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/academic-performance/help-academic-concession/>

If you need a concession, you should immediately speak to Advising, who will follow-up with me to handle the academic side of things. In-term concessions, which handle things like missed assignments or deadlines, are handled usually by extending the deadline or adjusting the final grading of the course (e.g. omitting an assessment). Alternative forms of assessment may also be used if suitable and recommended by Advising.

Support from UBC

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available [here](#).