

---

Course Number:	ECON 550-001	Day/Time:	TR 2:00 – 3:15 pm
Credit Hours:	3.0	Term:	Spr 2020
Prerequisites:	ECON 400, ECON 410	Bldg/Room:	107 Smith Hall
Professor:	Donna Gilleskie	Office Hours:	T: 3:30 – 4:30 pm W: 2:00 – 3:00 pm
Office:	06B Gardner Hall	Email:	donna_gilleskie@unc.edu
Phone:	(919) 966-5372		
Grading:	Paper Prospectus	5 %	due Feb 6
	Homework (3)	15 %	due Feb 13, Feb 27, Mar 26
	Presentation	15 %	during Apr 7-16
	Reviews (2)	10 %	reviews of classmates' progress
	Empirical Paper	30 %	due Apr 23 (15 pages)
	Final Exam	20 %	May 4, noon – 3:00 pm
	Participation	5 %	Engagement (attendance, comments, questions, attention)
Textbook:	none		
Readings:	journal articles (links or pdfs to be provided by instructor)		
Sakai Site:	<a href="https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/">https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/</a> .		

---

### Course Description

This course exposes students to empirical investigation of common questions in research, policymaking, and consulting in the field of health economics. We discuss treatment effects, marginal effects, and prediction related to medical care expenditures, medical care utilization, and health production. We examine the commonly-used econometric models in the field of health economics and discuss approaches to choosing the most appropriate model. The importance of the research and policy questions in the area of health and health care require that economists understand the empirical models – and interpret correctly the results of these models – on which conclusions may be based. We use real-world survey data to implement the models and study applications of the models in current academic research publications. Students gain substantial data management skills and improve their programming skills in Stata. The class format includes traditional lecture, in-class programming/execution, discussion of research papers, and some group work.

This course meets the "Research and Discovery" objective of the new IDEAs in action curriculum (which does not apply to those graduating in May). The learning objective is as follows: Student immerse themselves in a research project and experience the reflection and revision involved in producing and disseminating original scholarship or creative works.

### Questions for Students

1. How do I establish my point of view, take intellectual risks, and begin producing original scholarship or creative works?
2. How do I narrow my topic, critique current scholarship, and gather evidence in systematic and responsible ways?
3. How do I evaluate my findings and communicate my conclusions?

## Learning Outcomes

1. Frame a topic, develop an original research question or creative goal, and establish a point of view, creative approach, or hypothesis.
2. Obtain a procedural understanding of how conclusions can be reached in a field and gather appropriate evidence.
3. Evaluate the quality of the arguments and/or evidence in support of the emerging product.
4. Communicate findings in a clear and compelling ways.
5. Critique and identify the limits of the conclusions of the project and generate of the project and generate ideas for future work.

Homework assignments (15%)

Empirical exercises help students gain experience dealing with data issues and estimation methods. You select one data set (among five provided to you) to use for all your homework assignments. Homework questions are generic and applicable to all the five data sources (which will be described in the first week of class). Due dates are assigned throughout semester. Homework assignments submitted after the due date receive no credit.

Prospectus of research project (5%)

The prospectus is an extended plan (2-3 pages) for your research paper. It states your research question, briefly highlights why your research question is relevant/important to study, cites previous studies on a similar topic, indicates data source, presents a simple model with the error structure, lists variables, and discusses potential issues with the validity of your model. In the process of working on your research project, you will meet with me in my office to discuss your research question, proposed research methods, and empirical results.

Presentation and peer review (15% and 10%)

Students are required to present their progress on their research paper for 10 minutes followed by a five-minute Q&A session. The date of each presentation will be assigned randomly in the last month of the semester. Hence, some students will be presenting a preliminary version of their paper (or plan), while others will be presenting a nearly complete version depending on the date. For each presentation, two students will be assigned as discussants (or referees). The presenter must send the latest draft of the paper and presentation slides to both discussants and myself at least 2 days prior to presentation. The discussants will prepare 1-3 pages of written comments (a “referee report”) aimed at improving the paper and will lead the Q&A session. Separate grades will be given for the presentation and for the two referee reports.

Research paper (30%)

The final paper is about 15 pages long. Using one of the micro-level longitudinal datasets provided, the paper should detail estimation of an empirical model that addresses the question at hand and demonstrate research methods learned during the course. The paper cannot be used for credit in another class. The paper must be submitted by the due date. Papers handed in after the due date but before the final examination will be marked down by one letter grade. Papers handed in after the final examination will receive no credit.

Final exam (20%)

The final exam asks questions that test your understanding of the application of economic theory to empirical research and of the appropriateness of different empirical models. The basis of these questions will come from classwork and homework, your own research, the research presented by your classmates, and the readings.

Participation (5%)

Participation in this class is demonstrated through attendance, attention, making substantive contribution to discussions, and completing in-class assignments. I expect you to be on time, have completed the assigned readings, and actively engage and participate in the classroom activities.

Course topics timetable

An outline of topics, with dates and outside reading assignments, accompanies this syllabus. Although this outline gives a chronology of topics, some deviations from the proposed order may be necessary as the class progresses. Students are responsible for attending classes and learning of any changes in the schedule. At the end of each class I will try to remind students which readings will be beneficial for the following class period.

Policies and Expectations

Please check Sakai regularly. Homework, the prospectus, paper, and review reports should be submitted through Sakai. The system will accept submissions until 5:00 pm on the due date. If you prefer, you may submit a hard copy of your work in class on the due date.

Engagement in the course (demonstrated through attendance, attention, comments, questions, active listening, and respect toward the teacher and fellow students...in a word, participation) is expected and a part of the learning experience. While I understand that students may not be able to attend every class, students must likewise understand that an absence from class may result in missed information and, consequently, a lower grade. I will not (and cannot) replicate our hour-and-fifteen-minute class in my office hours. It will be your responsibility to obtain the missed information. Generally, however, I hope that you will come talk to me in office hours if you have questions that cannot be answered in class.

Students may not use tablets, phones, or similar devices during the lecture. Laptops will be used (when instructed to do so) to conduct classroom Stata work, and Stata work only. The impetus behind this rule is: First, your contemporaries have shown that they will engage, during class, in non-course activities on these devices. Second, such activity disrupts your classmates and disruptive behavior violates section II.C.1.k of the Honor Code. Third, it interferes with your learning (see <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>). Numerous studies show that “disconnected” students perform significantly better than their “connected” peers.

You are expected to contribute your fair share to group projects. Ratings of individual participation from each group member will be solicited.

Resources

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.”

**Accessibility Resources & Services:** UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health struggles, chronic medical conditions, temporary disability, or pregnancy complications, all of which can impair student success. See the ARS website for contact and registration information: <https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/contact-us>”

Honor Code Statement

Students are bound by the Honor Code in taking exams and in written work. The Honor Code of the University is in effect at all times, and the submission of work signifies understanding and acceptance of those requirements. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please consult with me if you have any questions about the Honor Code.