

ECONOMICS 409.01

RESEARCH METHODS IN EXPERIMENTAL ECONOMICS

SPRING 2020, TTh 2:00 - 3:20 PM, TYLER 121

PROFESSOR LISA ANDERSON

Course Description

In the first half of the semester students work together to design and conduct human subject experiments that address research questions motivated by prior coursework in economics. In the second half of the semester students analyze the resulting data and work independently to prepare manuscripts. Students meet regularly during the data analysis and writing phase of the course to make progress reports on their manuscripts and to discuss any challenges they face with their research. Students also exchange rough drafts of papers and provide written feedback to each other. At the end of the semester all research subjects are invited to attend a seminar in which students present the findings from their research papers.

Useful Information

Office: Tyler Hall, Room 265

Office Phone: 221.2359

Office Hours: by appointment

E-mail: lisa.anderson@wm.edu

Important Dates

Spring Break: March 7 – 15.

Last Day to Withdraw: March 23.

Rough Draft of Paper Due to Classmate: April 2

Comments Due Back to Classmate: April 9

Rough Draft of Paper Due to LA: April 14

Presentation of Results to Participants: April 28

Last Day of Class: April 30.

Final Paper Due: Wednesday, May 13 at 5 pm.

Grades and Policies

Your grade for this course will come from class participation (35%) and a final paper (65%).

Class Participation: Starting on the first day of class, you must keep a journal with details about your contribution to the data collection process (e.g., what dates did you recruit subjects, how many subjects were recruited and in what classes, what dates did you run experiments, what sessions of data did you enter, etc.). Once you begin writing research papers, we will meet on a regular basis to discuss challenges with the research process. You will also be required to read a rough draft of a classmate's paper and provide detailed feedback. These research-related activities are another component of your class participation. You should update your journal over the course of the semester. I will use the information you provide in your journal to determine class participation grades, so it is important that you keep accurate and detailed records. You should not wait until the end of the semester to complete your journal entries. You will not remember details about your class participation at the end of the semester. If you fail to keep good records about the data collection and research-related tasks you complete this semester, your class participation grade will be adversely affected. The journal you submit to me should be typed, double spaced, with 12 point font. You are bound by the honor code to honestly report your class participation. Finally, as part of your class participation you each will make a 5-minute presentation about

your research findings for the subjects who participated in the experiments. The presentation should be non-technical since the subjects will not be economics majors. You will run through the presentation and provide feedback to your classmates prior to making the presentation to the research subjects.

Final Paper: We will conduct a series of research experiments to build a data set this semester, and you will write a paper using some or all of this data. You will submit rough drafts of sections of your paper to me for feedback over the course of the semester. I will provide more specific details about the paper on Blackboard.

General Timeline

January: Recruit Subjects

February: Run Experiments and Enter Data in Spreadsheets

March and April: Prepare Final Paper

Resources

Writing Resource Center: The Writing Resources Center, located on the first floor of Swem Library, is a free service provided to W&M students. Trained consultants offer individual assistance with writing, presentation, and other communication assignments at any stage, from generating ideas to polishing a final product, and across disciplines. To make an appointment, visit the WRC webpage www.wm.edu/wrc. I suggest that you make an appointment now for later in the semester. Appointment slots fill up fast late in the semester.

Stata Lab: The economics department now has a Stata lab to assist you with the data analysis portion of your research. The lab is open Sundays through Wednesdays from 6 to 9 pm in Tyler 228.

Recruiting Subjects for Experiments

We need approximately 200 subjects to participate in experiments this semester, which means that we need a list of at least 500 individuals who are interested in participating. Subjects for the research experiments will be recruited from undergraduate courses at the College.

Step 1: Identify relatively large introductory-level classes and contact the professor of the class to ask if you may visit his or her class for recruiting. Please work together as a class to decide who will contact which professors so you will not duplicate effort (and bombard professors with multiple e-mails). I suggest that you go in pairs to visit classes so that you can circulate sign-up sheets quickly.

Sample E-mail to Professor: Dear Professor X: I am a student in Economics 409: Research Methods in Experimental Economics which is being taught by Professor Lisa Anderson. We are recruiting students to participate in economics research experiments as part of our course this semester. Is it possible for me to come to your Principles of Economics class one day this (or next) week to make a brief announcement about the experiments and circulate a sign-up sheet? It should take no more than 10 minutes. I can come at the beginning or end of your class. If you have any concerns about this request, feel free to contact Professor Anderson at lisa.anderson@wm.edu. Thanks in advance for your help.

If anyone asks you about PHSC approval, let them know that this experimental protocol is currently under review by the W&M Protection of Human Subjects Committee (PHSC-2018-12-30-13320-lrande).

Once you make arrangements with professors, you should attend classes, read the script on Blackboard and circulate sign-up sheets (or provide the ORSEE address for students to sign up on their own).

Step 2: Enter names and e-mail addresses of potential subjects in ORSEE (if you distribute sign-up sheets).

Step 3: Recruit for specific sessions using ORSEE.

Running Experiments

We will run approximately 10 experimental sessions (with 20 subjects in each session) in February. We will work together to plan the schedule of experimental sessions. Ideally, there will be 3 or 4 students from this class working together to run each session. As a rule-of-thumb, each person in class should plan to attend 5 or 6 experimental sessions. I use signupgenius.com to coordinate the experiment schedule. I will send you a link for the sign-up page once the session schedule is determined. Note that we will not all meet as a class during the period of time we are running experiments.

Data Entry

Some parts of the experiments might be conducted using computers and data will be automatically saved to a spreadsheet. However, some experiments will be conducted using pen and paper so those data will have to be manually entered into excel.