

Economics of Education
Econ 4180-01
Fall 2022

Instructor: Fulya Ersoy, Assistant Professor of Economics

Contact Information:
Email: fulya.ersoy@lmu.edu

Class Time: Tue/Thu 9:55 am-11:35 am

Class Location: St. Robert's Hall 361*

***Zoom link for online classes:**

Meeting ID: 850 0929 2092

Passcode: econEduc

<https://lmula.zoom.us/j/85009292092?pwd=b1VuNktpSjlGaUR0TjRQelZmSVUwZz09>

Office Hours:

Tuesday 2:30 pm-3:30 pm (in person)

Wednesday 2:30 pm-3:30 pm, 5:30pm-6:30pm (in person)

Friday 10:00 am – 11:00 am (on zoom)

Location for Tuesday/Wednesday: University Hall 4223

Zoom link for Friday office hours:

Meeting ID: 848 6821 6672

Passcode: econisfun

<https://lmula.zoom.us/j/84868216672?pwd=TlFmSVBtMWcxQ0RkWmNHRDITZkNsdz09>

Course Description

This course investigates economic issues related to education. We will discuss the theory behind the decision to invest in education. We will talk about private and social returns to education as well as signaling value of education. We will investigate which factors (class size, teachers, incentives, peers, etc.) matters in determining the success of students. We will talk about school choice, college choice, major choice and college financing. Throughout the course, we will learn how different empirical methods (differences-in-differences and regression discontinuity, in particular) are used to answer the economics of education questions. We will also look at how field and laboratory experiments are used to answer the questions of interest.

Prerequisites: Minimum C- in ECON 3100 and minimum C- in ECON 3300.

Learning Outcomes

Ultimate Outcome: Develop a research paper that explores an economics of education related question using the appropriate methods

Mediating Outcomes:

- Frame a research problem/hypothesis
- Conduct and write up an adequate literature review and justify significance of your research problem within the literature
- Compare and contrast different quasi-experimental methods such as regression discontinuity, instrumental variables and differences in differences
- Choose the appropriate research design
- Describe the appropriate data to answer your research question
- Use STATA to analyze data

Critical Thinking Outcomes:

- Evaluate the appropriateness of procedures for investigation of a question of causation
- Separate factual information from inferences
- Separate relevant from irrelevant information
- Evaluate competing causal explanations
- Explain the limitations of correlational data
- Locate and use relevant primary and secondary sources to conduct research
- Assess alternative solutions and implement the optimal ones.

Disclaimer: (1) Students may vary in their competency levels on these outcomes and (2) they can expect to achieve these outcomes only if they honor all course policies, attend classes regularly, complete all assigned work in good faith and on time, and meet all other course expectations of them as students.

Readings

Textbook (Required): Lovenheim, Micheal and Sarah Turner (2018). Economics of Education.

You will also have many **required readings** as well as optional readings. **The reading list** is attached at the end of the syllabus and subject to change. Check Brightspace course page frequently.

Stata

We will use Stata extensively in this course, both inside and outside of the class. Please download Stata on your personal computers using this link and then click at-home software for students: <https://its.lmu.edu/whatwedo/computingsoftware/> if you do not already have it. I recommend Stata SE since it can accommodate a higher number of variables.

Assessment Tools

In this class, you will be assessed by

Class Participation (%12):

Attendance is mandatory, but you can miss up to 5 classes without any penalties. Your active participation in the class discussions is expected.

You will have 10 required readings (not including chapter readings). You need to submit your answer to the questions about the required readings **before the class begins** either in hard copy or on Brightspace. Late submissions will not be accepted. I will randomly choose a few of you to present his/her answers to the questions. This assignment needs to be done **individually**. This assignment will be graded as check minus, check or check plus.

Problem Sets (12%):

You will have 6 problem sets. This assignment needs to be done **individually**. Late submissions will be accepted with a 10% penalty per day (at most 3 days). If you submit it after 3 days but before the final day of classes, you can get at most half of the points. Problem set solutions will be posted on Brightspace.

Mid-term Exam (25%):

You will have one exam which covers all topics we will have learnt until that point in the class. The exam needs to be taken **individually**.

Policy on Make-Up Exam

If you miss an exam for participation in a LMU mandated or required university-sponsored activity, or grave illness, then you will take a make-up exam for the missed exam grade.

Important: Both of these cases need to be supported by **documentation**. Please note that Student Health Services does not provide medical excuse notes, so you need to get medical documentation from another facility. The medical documentation should have the doctor's name, signature, date and the reason. In all these cases, *you must notify me that you will miss the exam before the exam is given.*

If you miss an exam for any other reason, there are no make-up options.

Class Presentations (10%+3%)

Class Presentations will be done individually at the end of the semester (Weeks 14-15). You will choose a starred (*) paper from the reading list to present. You will be given a template for this presentation and a rubric about how it will be graded. Both the content of your presentation and your presentation skills will be graded. I recommend starting 2 weeks in advance of your presentation date to prepare. *If you need to change your presentation date*, you need to find another person who can switch with you and inform me about it. During the presentation, audience needs to pay close attention since you will be doing a short quiz after each presentation which will be 3% of your grade.

Research Project (40%)

This assignment needs to be done **in groups of two or three**. You will choose your groupmates. All group members should work and are equally responsible for all parts of the research project. It is not allowed to divide work between group members. Every group member should know all the details of the project. Any indication of free-riding is treated as academic dishonesty and will guarantee you a 0 on the assignment.

Research Proposal (10% of your overall grade)

The research proposal will be on a question in the economics of education that interests you. The research proposal is an outline of how you would research a question. Its key components are motivation, literature review and description of available data. You must note the contribution of each group member to the submitted assignment. You will be given an example research proposal and a rubric about how it will be graded. Late submissions will be accepted with a 10% penalty per day (at most 3 days).

The reading list should provide some starting points on your possible research topic. You should also look into the major journals in the economics of education: Economics of Education Review, Education Economics, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Education Finance and Policy, Journal of Education Finance, Journal of Human Capital, Journal of Human Resources, Research in Higher Education.

Dataset Proposal (10% of your overall grade)

I will return your research proposals with suggestions about which dataset among the ones you described is the most suitable for this project. For the data proposal, you need to describe the data you choose (the source, a link to the website, the unit of observation, the number of observations, and time period) and you need to describe the variables you will use clearly. Most importantly, you need to submit a **cleaned version** of your dataset in the Stata format (.dta). You also need to explain how you have cleaned or recoded the data to generate the variables you will use for your analysis. You must note the contribution of each group member to the submitted assignment. Late submissions will be accepted with a 10% penalty per day (at most 3 days).

Research Paper (20% of your overall grade)

Research paper is the final stage of the project and it will include refined versions of your research proposal and dataset proposal as well as the actual analysis of the data. You must note the contribution of each group member to the submitted assignment. You will be given a rubric about how the research paper will be graded. Late submissions will be accepted with a 10% penalty per day (at most 3 days).

Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter with severe consequences that can range from receiving no credit for assignments, failing the class, to expulsion. It is never permissible to turn in any work that *has not been authored* by the student, such as work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including the Internet and solution manuals) without properly acknowledging the source. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard set forth in the “Academic Honesty Policy” (see <http://academics.lmu.edu/honesty>.)

Any indication of free-riding is treated as academic dishonesty and will guarantee you a 0 on the assignment. Any repeat instances of such will lead to an F in the class. I reserve the right to quiz you individually about the details of answers on assignments – failure to clearly explain the presented answers and all related aspects implies a charge of academic dishonesty.

Grades

Grades will not be rounded. Letter grades are assigned according to the grading scale below:

93 or above	A
between 90 (inclusive) and 93 (exclusive)	A-
between 87 (inclusive) and 90 (exclusive)	B+
between 83 (inclusive) and 87 (exclusive)	B
between 80 (inclusive) and 83 (exclusive)	B-
between 77 (inclusive) and 80 (exclusive)	C+
between 73 (inclusive) and 77 (exclusive)	C
between 70 (inclusive) and 73 (exclusive)	C-
between 60 (inclusive) and 70 (exclusive)	D
Below 60	F

Grade Dispute Policy

If you want to dispute your grade from an assignment, you need to submit a formal written justification for the change citing the relevant material and the relevant part of the rubric within forty-eight hours.

Tentative Nature of the Syllabus

If necessary, the modality of the class (online/in-person), the contents of this syllabus, the reading list, and the due dates for assignments are subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications announced or distributed in class or posted on Brightspace.

Communication

I will use Brightspace in an active manner to post materials, rubrics, announcements. Make sure you check it regularly.

I will communicate with the class and individual students using campus email, so it is essential that you regularly check your lion.lmu.edu email account or the preferred email address to which you forward.

If you send me an email on a *weekday*, I will reply within 24 hours unless I have no internet access. If you do not hear back from me within 24 hours, feel free to email me again.

Electronic Devices

Please **turn off and put out of sight all electronic devices** (other than those and when allowed) during class-time. The interruptions and/or distractions they cause disrupt class and interfere with the learning process.

Respect for Self and Others

As an LMU Lion, by the Lion's Code, you are pledged to join the discourse of the academy with honesty of voice and integrity of scholarship and to show respect for staff, professors, and other students.

The Writing Center at LMU

An important part of improving your writing is getting feedback and revision suggestions on your writing projects in progress. The Writing Center offers free tutoring sessions (online or face-to-face) in which you can get feedback from a peer writer on your digital and print texts for any class at any stage in your process. For more information, including hours of operation, check out the Writing Center's website: <https://academics.lmu.edu/arc/writingcenter/>. When you're ready to make an appointment with a writing tutor, contact the writing center (Daum Hall, 2nd floor, 310-338-2847).

Special Accommodations

Students with special needs who require reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2nd floor, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.lmu.edu/dss> for additional information.

Reporting Requirements of Sexual or Interpersonal Misconduct

As "responsible employees," faculty are required to report any case of suspected sexual or interpersonal misconduct and cannot protect student confidentiality. For information about confidential counseling on campus and for general information about consensual relationships, sexual harassment, and sexual assault, please see the LMU Cares website:

<http://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/lmucares/>

Important Dates (Subject to Change)

Sep 6, Tuesday: Send an email to me (fulya.ersoy@lmu.edu) which has the names of your group members up to 3 people (they should be cc'ed in the email) for your research project (*one email per group*).

Sep 13, Tuesday: Send an email regarding possible questions/topics (3 is a good number) for your research project to me (fulya.ersoy@lmu.edu). The email should have subject line containing "Research Proposal Topics" (*one email per group*).

Sep 15, Thursday: Problem Set 1 is due at the beginning of class.

Week 4 (Sep 19-Sep 23): Each group must meet with me to discuss the research question. A special appointment link will be sent to you. Please use that link to book your appointment.

Sep 29, Thursday: Problem Set 2 is due at the beginning of class.

Oct 6, Thursday: Research Proposal is due at 11:59 PM (You will get guidelines. Start Early!)

Oct 13, Thursday: Problem Set 3 is due at the beginning of class.

Oct 27, Thursday: Problem Set 4 is due at the beginning of class.

Nov 1, Tuesday: Last day to email me the list of your preferred readings to present (Please send a rank ordered list with at least 3 papers. If you don't send a list, I will assign you a paper.)

Nov 3, Thursday: Exam (You will get guidelines)

Nov 10, Thursday: Data Proposal is due at 11:59 PM (You will get guidelines. Start Early!)

Nov 15, Tuesday: Class will be held online.

Nov 17, Thursday: Problem Set 5 is due at 5:00 PM. No class.

Nov 22, Tuesday: Class will be held online.

Nov 24, Thursday: No class (Thanksgiving break)

Week 14-Week 15 (Nov 29-Dec 8): Your presentations on (*) readings. See the reading list.

Dec 8, Thursday: Problem Set 6 is due at the beginning of class.

Dec 15, Thursday: Research Paper is due at 11:59 PM (You will get guidelines. Start Early!)
Note: All times are PT.

Course Expectations

Communication

- 1) I will utilize Brightspace calendar to let you know about upcoming deadlines of your assignments.
- 2) I will respond to your e-mails within 24 hours. If I don't reply within 24 hours, feel free to email me again.
- 3) I will communicate with the class and individual students using campus email, so it is essential that you regularly check your lion.lmu.edu email account or the preferred email address to which you forward.
- 4) You are expected to login Brightspace on a daily basis, even if it is only for a few minutes. I will use Brightspace in an active manner to post materials and announcements and to post your grades. Please make sure you are subscribed to Brightspace notifications to get those announcements as emails or text messages.

Assignments and Grading

- 1) I will grade your assignments within a week. I will post solutions for the problem sets on Brightspace.
- 2) I will use the gradebook on Brightspace to communicate your grades.

Workload

- 1) This course is worth 4 credit hours. You are expected to spend, on average, 9 hours per week outside of class, on assignments, readings, and studying.
- 2) You are strongly encouraged to attend office hours. The material covered in this course is often challenging, and you should consider office hours as an additional resource to aid in your understanding.
- 3) During classes, please ask questions if you are confused and take notes.

Masks

While there is currently no mask mandate, I invite you to consider the question of wearing a mask in this classroom in the context of LMU's [Mission](#) and [Ignatian](#) values. Our Mission's ethic of *cura personalis* (the care and education of the whole person) as individual members of a closely knit and diverse campus community complements the Jesuit ethical and moral commitments to moving through the world as people committed to solidarity and justice. Given the uneven impact of the pandemic on racialized and working class communities, these social contexts complicate what at first glance, appears to be solely an individual choice. This is the difference a Jesuit education makes.