

14.33 Economics Research and Communication

Fall 2023

Lecture meetings will be in E51-395 on Monday & Wednesday 10:30-noon
When the class breaks into two groups, the meetings will be held in E51-395 (Team Jim)
and E51-385 (Team Kelsey)

Instructors:

James Poterba
poterba@mit.edu
E52-444
Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant:

Arthur Wickard
wickard@mit.edu
Office Hours: Thursday/Friday, 9:30-10:30, E52-548

Kelsey Jack

kjack@mit.edu

E52-552

OH: By appointment

Course Description and Prerequisites: This course will guide you through the process of forming testable economic hypotheses, gathering appropriate data, analyzing the data to test a hypothesis, and effectively communicating their results. You are expected to have successfully completed 14.32 (or an equivalent) as well as classes in basic microeconomics or macroeconomics (such as 14.01 or 14.02); if you have not, please write to Professor Poterba to request an exception. It is useful to have taken at least one economics field/elective class and performed a UROP before taking this course, but these are not requirements.

Texts: There are a number of texts that could be useful to consult. A good econometrics textbook at the level of 14.32 (such as *Mastering 'Metrics*, by Angrist along with Jörn-Steffen Pischke) will certainly come in handy. We also strongly recommend that you purchase *The Little Book of Research Writing* by Varanya Chaubey. It is an excellent introduction on writing a paper and to the methodology of posing a research question and developing an argument for a research paper (particularly in Economics). There are two additional suggested texts: Dierdre McCloskey's *Economical Writing* (a very nice, and very short, book about how to write well, from one of the best in the business) and a free pamphlet called "Writing Economics" by Neugeboren and Jacobson, here: <https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/files/hwp/files/writingeconomics.pdf>.

Requirements: Grades are based on full participation in all aspects of the course. This includes attendance and participation in class (both lectures and your peers' presentations) and required office hours (10%), an initial research summary problem set (10%), oral presentations associated with your research paper (20%), the series of interim drafts associated with your research paper (30%), the first full draft of your research paper

(25%), and your final submission (5%). There will be no exams, and nothing will be due during finals week.

The research paper (13-pages minimum, 15-pages maximum) will be based on original economic research that you perform over the course of the semester. The page length guidance is based on double-spacing with 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins; bibliographic references, tables and figures (all very important) should be placed at the end of the paper and are not counted in the page limits. Likewise, if your paper requires additional material that is important for inclusion but could be skipped by a reader, you may include this in an (optional) Appendix that does not count towards the page limit.

Schedule, submissions, and deadlines:

See the separate attachment for a detailed plan for the semester, including all deadlines.

Completed assignments must be provided in digital form and uploaded to the course website (which will mark as late assignments submitted after the deadline). For almost all assignments, late submissions will receive no credit. However, late submissions of the first full draft of the research paper will be accepted but the corresponding grades will be penalized a full letter grade for each day that the paper is late.

The standard programming language for this course is STATA, and we will offer tutorials in this language. It will help if you have learned it previously, such as in 14.32. Submissions of assignments based on R will be accepted, but we cannot offer the same tutorial support in this language. Please talk to Arthur Wickard if you prefer another programming language.

Other course resources and policies:

- Course website. The course website (on Canvas) will host course materials, be used to post and submit course assignments, and be used to post announcements regarding administrative course matters. It is your responsibility to make a habit of regularly checking the website or (better) to ensure that you are set up to receive emails whenever an announcement is made there or something new is posted.
- Add/drop dates. Please note that the add date is October 6 and the drop date is November 22.
- Library resources. The MIT Libraries offer a wide array of services designed to aid your research (<https://libraries.mit.edu>), including personal research consultations to help you locate both literature and data. Please feel very free to contact the Economics Librarian, Nicholas Albaugh (ncda1979@mit.edu), to ask research questions or to schedule an appointment. Nicholas will also be giving a lecture about these themes.
- Writing and Communication Center. The Writing and Communication Center (12-132, <https://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>), offers free one-

on-one professional advice from published writers about both oral presentations and all types of academic, creative, and professional writing. This class will not focus on teaching the art of good writing *per se*, since our focus will be on conducting high-quality economics research and achieving a successful and structured way of communicating that. But your paper will be even more successful at making sure your research is fully appreciated and understood, within the page limits, if it is well written. The Writing and Communication Center can help you with this.

- Students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should follow the guidance from MIT Student Disabilities Services (<https://studentlife.mit.edu/sds>) to navigate ways to meet their needs for disability-related accommodations.
- Other course policies. You are encouraged to discuss all course material with other students in the class. However, you must hand in your own individual assignments. Discussion with others is intended to clarify ideas, concepts, and technical questions, not to write up joint assignments. If you use ChatGPT or a similar AI-based tool to write any part of your assignments, please indicate that. One assignment will ask you to use such tools. Cheating or academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated and will result in strict punitive action. This includes but is not restricted to copying material from other students, lying, or plagiarizing from any source. We use anti-plagiarism software to detect material that has been copied from elsewhere so be sure to do so only while giving appropriate credit and sparingly. See <http://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/what-plagiarism> for clarification on what constitutes plagiarism. Any student found to have cheated or behaved unethically or dishonestly will be given a grade of F on the assignment involved and referred to the appropriate disciplinary committees within MIT for further action. If you have questions or concerns, the Academic Integrity at MIT Handbook is an excellent resource: <http://integrity.mit.edu>.