

# Econ 309 Economic Problems And Public Policies

Summer 2025, Online

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Office Hour: [Book Here](#)

## Course Description

This class is an introduction to important economic questions we face in real life. It aims to introduce you the basic concepts, empirical findings, and most importantly, equip you with econometric tools to address the economic problems and public policy evaluation.

- **Objectives:** Learning causal inference techniques and applying design-based approach to real life examples. Students will be able to evaluate public policies and the validity of empirical findings.
- **Format:** I will record videos and make them available on the date specified in class schedule. There will be no regular Q&A sessions.
- **Course Website:** Course materials are available on [Canvas](#).
- **Recommended Text:** Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton university press, 2009.

## Basics

- **Class Communication:** You must use your official **Mason email** for class communication. I encourage you to add **Econ 309** to the subject line, as this will help me prioritize your email.
- **Office Hour:** If you would like to meet, you must book a slot in the above link one day in advance. A Zoom link will be generated after filling out the information. Currently, I have set our office hours on Thursdays 9:30-11am EST. In some weeks, I may have to reschedule, please pay attention to the newest announcements. Let me know if you would like to meet outside the designated time slots.

- **The Use of AI:** You are encouraged to explore our course materials with various AI platforms as they are valuable for your self-paced learning. However, it is important that you have the critical knowledge to evaluate the outputs generated by large language models (LLM).
- **Honor Code:** All materials you submitted must be your own work.
- **GMU Common Course Policies:** Regarding academic standards, accommodations for students with disabilities, FERPA rule, and Title IX resources and required reporting, please consult [GMU Common Course Policies](#).

## Grading

- **Problem Sets:** There are 5 problem sets in total. All assignments are due on **11:59pm EST**.
- **Case Study:** You will be asked to draft a research design (double-spacing, **2-page max**) for whatever economic problems and/or public policies that appeal your interest. You must specify the problem you will study, the hypothesis you will propose and the economic rationales/intuition behind it, data you would like to gather, and empirical strategy for your proposal. Your grade will mostly depend on the validity of your empirical strategy, and you have an opportunity to revise and resubmit your case study after your initial submission.
- **Student Presentations:** You will be asked to present one research paper and the list of papers will be provided after the Midterm. You can record your presentation and submit it to Canvas, or schedule an one-on-one meeting with me. During your presentation, you must specify the research question, empirical strategy, primary results, and research implications. Your presentation must be no more than 10 minutes.
- **Midterm & Final:** You will have 24 hours to complete your exams. You should be able to complete your exams within 2 hours.
- **Late Assignment Policy:** No late assignments will be accepted. I will drop your lowest grade on problem sets. No make-up exams will be offered. However, exceptions will only be made for emergencies in accordance with University policy.

Task	Weight
Problem Sets	25%
Case Study	10%
Student Presentation	20%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	25%

## Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic/Event
1	May 23	Introduction and Causal Inference
2	May 27	Education
	May 31	Problem Set 1 Due
3	Jun 3	Immigration
	Jun 7	Problem Set 2 Due
4	Jun 10	International Trade
5	Jun 17	Case study
	Jun 20	Midterm
6	Jun 24	Labor Market
	Jun 28	Problem Set 3 Due
7	Jul 1	Automation
	Jul 5	Problem Set 4 Due
8	Jul 8	Inequality and Intergenerational Mobility
	Jul 12	Problem Set 5 Due
9	Jul 15	Economics of AI
10	Jul 22	Student Presentations
	Jul 25	Final Exam