
EC481WH2: Economics Paper & Seminar

Course Outline — Fall 2025

Time (Location): 1:00 – 3:50 PM, TH (P327)

Department of Economics, Lazaridis School of Business & Economics
Wilfrid Laurier University

Instructor Information

Instructor: M. Jahangir Alam, PhD
E-mail: moalam@wlu.ca
Office: Lazaridis Hall, LH2015
Office Hours: MW 9:30 AM–10:30 AM (or by appointment)
Librarian: Yanli Li (yli@wlu.ca)

Course Description

This course applies economic theory and econometric methods to explore a specific research question. Students will design and complete an independent research project that involves preparing a proposal, conducting empirical analysis, and presenting their findings in a professional setting.

Prerequisites

EC270, EC281, EC290, EC370, EC390, and EC395.

Course Information

Mode of Delivery: In-person

Required Textbook: None

Costs of Materials: None

Course Website: MyLearningSpace

Course Learning Objectives

The Undergraduate Economics Program outlines specific learning goals and objectives for all students. As the capstone course, **EC481** is designed to help students achieve these outcomes by integrating theoretical knowledge, empirical methods, and research skills.

PROGRAM GOALS	PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
1. Graduates will have a broad understanding of economic theory and practice.	1.1 Identify important economic institutions nationally and globally. 1.4 Demonstrate understanding of empirical techniques in economics.
2. Graduates will have effective communication skills.	2.2 Conduct effective oral presentations.
3. Graduates will have professional skills relevant for careers in economics.	3.1 Manage large datasets for the purpose of analysis. 3.2 Use computer software common in economic research, including statistical analysis software.
4. Graduates will be critical thinkers.	4.1 Incorporate economic theory and empirical analysis in the evaluation of economic decisions.
5. Graduates will be able to develop and complete a complex research project.	5.1 Apply economic theory and empirical models to a capstone research project.

Course Timeline

Date (Thursday)	Week's Activities
Sept 4, 2025	Introductory class (in person).
Sept 11, 2025	Mandatory meetings with the instructor to finalize research questions and review data sources.
Sept 18, 2025	Library Information Session, September 15 at 8:30am, over Zoom.
Sept 25, 2025	Proposal Due — must include links to data sources and cited papers ¹ (at least three).
Oct 2, 2025	Proposal Presentations.
Oct 9, 2025	Proposal Presentations.
Oct 23, 2025	Meetings by appointment.
Oct 30, 2025	Progress meetings — bring runnable code and log files.
Nov 6, 2025	Progress meetings — bring runnable code and log files.
Nov 13, 2025	Preliminary Analysis Due — submit runnable code and log files; incomplete submissions will not be accepted.
Nov 20, 2025	Meetings by appointment.
Nov 26, 2025	Final Paper Draft Due — must include data links, cited papers, runnable code, and log files ¹ .
Nov 27, 2025	Final Paper Presentations (Dec 1 & 3 at 09:30 - 10:30 AM).
Dec 11, 2025	Final Paper Due — must include data links, cited papers (at least five), runnable code, and log files ¹ .

¹ Cited articles must be published **after 2015** in one of the top 10 economics journals: *American Economic Review (AER)*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics (QJE)*, *Journal of Political Economy (JPE)*, *Econometrica*, *Review of Economic Studies (ReStud)*, *Journal of Economic Theory (JET)*, *Journal of Econometrics*, *Review of Economics and Statistics (ReStat)*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives (JEP)*, and *Journal of Finance (JF)*. Please contact me if you require articles beyond these journals or time period.

Important Note

Students must complete each task **before** moving on to the next one. For example, I will **not accept** the proposal submission unless you have first met with me to discuss and finalize your research questions and data sources. Failure to complete earlier milestones on time may prevent participation in subsequent tasks.

Course Evaluation

Component	Weight	Due Date / Location
1. Paper Proposal		
1.1 Written Submission	10%	Sept 25, 2025 — 11:59pm (MyLearningSpace & Gradescope)
1.2 Proposal Presentation	5%	Oct 2 & Oct 9, 2025 — In class
2. Preliminary Analysis		
2.1 Written Submission	10%	Nov 13, 2025 — 11:59pm (MyLearningSpace & Gradescope)
3. Final Paper Draft		
3.1 Written Submission	15%	Nov 26, 2025 — 11:59pm (MyLearningSpace & Gradescope)
3.2 Final Presentation	10%	Nov 27 (Dec 1 & 3 at 9:30 - 10:30 AM), 2025 — In class
4. Final Paper	50%	Dec 11, 2025 — 11:59pm (MyLearningSpace & Gradescope)

Late Penalties

All written submissions are due at **11:59pm** on the assigned date. A penalty of **20% per 24 hours** (or part thereof) will apply to late submissions, and assignments submitted more than **5 days late** will receive a grade of **0**. In cases of **illness, compassionate circumstances, or religious accommodations**, exceptions to the late penalty may be granted. Students must notify the instructor **as soon as possible** and may be required to provide supporting documentation.

Academic Misconduct & AI Usage Policy

Academic integrity is a core value of Wilfrid Laurier University. Students are expected to complete their own work, uphold honesty in all academic activities, and take personal responsibility for their submissions. Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, falsification of data, unauthorized collaboration, and resubmission of the same work for multiple courses without prior approval are strictly prohibited. If you plan to extend work completed for another course (e.g., EC307), you **must** inform the instructor and submit the prior work at the time of your proposal; failure to do so constitutes academic misconduct.

Use of Generative AI Tools: Generative AI tools — including but not limited to **ChatGPT, Bard, Bing AI, Claude, and similar systems** — may be used **only for specific purposes outlined below**. Submitting a research paper or any graded assignment generated wholly or partially using AI tools, **without proper disclosure**, will be treated as

academic misconduct under *Senate Policy 12.2*. For more details, consult the Senate Policy 12.2: Student Code of Conduct — Academic Misconduct. For transparency, you **must clearly disclose in every report or submission** how you used AI.

Permitted uses of AI are strictly limited to:

1. **Searching for Articles:** You may use AI to locate relevant papers, but you **must verify all citations and links**. Generative AI tools can produce incorrect or fabricated references (“hallucinations”), so you are responsible for providing the **actual source link** for every article cited.
2. **Debugging Code Issues:** You may use AI to troubleshoot errors in your code. However, you must demonstrate that you understand the fix and confirm that the corrected code produces the intended results.
3. **Light Proofreading:** You may use AI to check grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, but not to generate substantive content or rewrite large sections of your assignments.

Privacy Statement

This course follows Wilfrid Laurier University’s policies on privacy and the protection of personal information. The following measures are in place:

1. **Confidentiality of Assessments:** Exams, assignments, and feedback are released only to the student who submitted them. If you prefer not to have your name called when returning work, inform the instructor in advance.
2. **Release of Grades:** Grades are posted exclusively on **MyLearningSpace** and will not be sent by email.
3. **Privacy of Student Performance:** Student performance and personal circumstances are not discussed publicly. To review your results or discuss concerns, book an appointment with the instructor.
4. **Class Participation:** Participation may involve your name appearing on class lists, bulletin boards, or online discussions. Contact the instructor during the first week for alternative arrangements if needed.
5. **Email Policy and Response Times (Policy 8.15):** Emails must be sent from your official **@wlu.ca** account. The instructor responds to emails between **9:00am–4:00pm, Monday to Friday** and typically replies within **one business day**.

6. **Special Privacy Requests:** If you require additional privacy accommodations, notify the instructor within the first week of classes.

For full details, see Laurier's Notice of Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information.

Notice of Data Collection

The Lazaridis School of Business & Economics is accredited with **AACSB**. AACSB accreditation helps further Laurier's goal of inspiring lives of leadership and purpose by demonstrating our commitment to impactful learning, community engagement, and professional growth. In order to maintain this accreditation, aggregate information about student performance in this course may be collected, analyzed, and disclosed to AACSB as part of the Lazaridis School's **Assurance of Learning (AoL)** reporting requirements. Your name, ID number, and individual performance will not be shared outside the university as part of this process.

If you have any questions, please contact the AoL coordinator at aol@wlu.ca. To find out more about how your personal information is collected, used, and disclosed, please review Laurier's **Notice of Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information**, or visit wlu.ca/privacy.

Accessible Learning

Students requiring academic accommodations should contact the Accessible Learning Centre. Review the Registration page for intake procedures and documentation requirements. Students are responsible for meeting posted deadlines. Requests received after deadlines cannot be guaranteed.

Intellectual Property

All course materials — including lecture notes, slides, handouts, assignments, and materials on **MyLearningSpace** — are the intellectual property of the instructor and are provided for student use only. Redistribution, recording, or sharing these materials without permission violates the instructor's rights and the **Canadian Copyright Act**. Recording lectures is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by the instructor. Participation in this course constitutes agreement to abide by these policies.

Other Resources

Free resources available to students include:

- Good2Talk (24/7 Mental Health Support)
- WLUSU Student Food Bank
- WLUSU Foot Patrol
- Waterloo Student Wellness Centre

Table 2: EC481 Final Paper Rubric

Section	Wt.	Criteria
Intro/Background (1.1)	15	Frames a clear question on an economic issue. Provides relevant background / history of the issue. Provides information on key economic statistics/stylized facts. Provides background on the key economic players (e.g., individuals, households, consumers, markets, governments, countries, international organizations).
Literature Review (4.1.1)	15	Finds relevant papers. Demonstrates knowledge of key findings in the field. Can distinguish past research based on quality. Distills key findings based on topic rather than paper-by-paper. Draws conclusions for own research/question.
Theoretical Models (4.1.2)	15	Identifies the economics intuition/theoretical model for the research question. Explains how the economics intuition/theory used applies to the question being explored. Uses theory to explain the expected relationship between key dependent variable(s) and independent variable(s).
Empirical Models (4.1.3)	15	Uses appropriate empirical method(s) in context. Applies methods correctly in the context. Identifies/discusses the limitations of the empirical method(s) used.
Results (4.1.4)	10	Correctly interprets estimated empirical results. Relates empirical estimates to theoretical predictions. Uses empirical results to answer the research question.
Data Management/Description (3.1)	20	Finds/compiles data that are appropriate to issue, compiling from multiple sources as needed. Variables clearly defined, including missing values, types of variables, etc. Variables created/transformed as needed (categorical; deflation; log). Sample chosen appropriately/irrelevant data properly omitted. Summary statistics provided and discussed. Presentation of data is effective; graphs used where relevant.
Writing (2.1)	10	Communicates well to a general economic audience — easy to read. Structure helps guide reader through paper. Paragraphs clearly arranged, writing flows between them. Effective, clear, correct word choice; economic language used precisely and effectively. Few grammatical errors/typos. References sources appropriately and with consistent formatting.
Final Grade	100	

Table 3: EC481 Presentation Rubric

Section	Wt.	Criteria
Speaking Technique (2.2.1)	30	Student uses effective volume. Student does not read. Student uses effective intonation. Student uses appropriate/effective eye contact. Student uses limited filler words. Student uses technical terms correctly. Student has no distracting mannerisms.
Communication Aids (2.2.2)	20	Student uses visually appealing aids. Student uses effective font size. Student does not use full paragraphs. Student uses appropriate level of details.
Organization (2.2.3)	25	Student clearly states the purpose of the presentation / research question. Student delivers information at the appropriate level for the audience. Student uses a logical structure for the presentation as a whole.
Professionalism (2.2.4)	25	Student meets time constraints. Student covers the required elements. Student addresses previous comments on presentation technique.
Final Grade	100	

Have a Great Semester!

I am thrilled to have you in EC481 and am committed to making this semester an enriching and enjoyable experience. If you have any questions or need support, feel free to contact the instructor. Let's collaborate, explore, and achieve together—have a fantastic semester ahead!

Note: Portions of this course outline were adapted from materials developed by Dr. Azim Essaji.