

ECON 191: Independent Research Seminar

Information Session

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What is Economics 191?

- A set of 2 classes (191A in Spring 2026, 191B in Fall 2026) during which students develop and conduct independent research projects
 - Q1: Refine the study design, gather/process data, produce initial results
 - Q2: Complete the analysis and produce an academic-style paper
- The typical completed paper runs 5,000-7,500 words (10-15 single-spaced pages plus figures, tables, and references)
 - Can serve as a writing sample for graduate school and job applications
 - May be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
- Examples from students in previous cohorts are available at:
<https://sites.google.com/site/ec191cullen/prior-papers>
- (Mandatory) class meetings focus on research methods, introductions to library/computing/writing resources, and student presentations of work in progress
- The meetings help to provide structure and feedback, but the bulk of the research process will be carried out independently

Typical Steps in the Research Process

- Topic selection
- Consultation with specialist librarians to identify data and literature
- Literature review and data acquisition
- Devising specific analysis plan in consultation with expert faculty
- Compiling data and conducting analyses
- Building from a detailed proposal to a rough draft to a polished paper

Should I apply to take Econ 191AB?

Good reasons to apply

- You would like to get experience conducting independent research
- You enjoy working independently and self-training as needed
- You are willing to be proactive and seek out guidance from faculty
- You are willing to invest a great deal of time in the process and support your peers

Bad reasons to apply

- You have good grades and this seems to be something that strong students do
- You want to graduate with the phrase “with highest distinction”

Eligibility

- Complete the first 2 courses of the microeconomics and econometrics core sequences (100AB and 120AB) ideally by the start of the Spring 2025 term, but certainly by the end of the Spring 2025 term
- Have a GPA of 3.5 or better in upper division economics courses (or a compelling explanation for any shortfall)
- Demonstrate promise for conducting original research and making a strong commitment to the course through your application and faculty feedback

Application

- The [Google Application](#) will open soon after the virtual information session
- All applications and materials (PDF copies of your degree audit and your proposal) must be submitted no later than [11:59PM on Thursday March 5, 2025](#)
- Your proposal must be 1,000-1,500 words (2-3 single-spaced pages), be written concisely, and include the following:
 1. What is your (tentative) research question and why is it important?
 2. What do key papers from the existing literature have to say about your question?
 3. How will you tackle your question? What data and empirical strategies will you use?
 4. Explain briefly why you are motivated to conduct independent research, and whether you have preparation beyond what is evident from your transcript
- Decisions on applications will be released on [Wednesday March 11, 2025](#)
- [Alternatives](#): Economics 199, Economics Research Lab, Research Assistance