

ECON 191: Independent Research Seminar

Information Session

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What is Economics 191?

- A set of 2 classes (191A in Fall 2026, 191B in Spring 2027) during which students develop and conduct independent research projects
 - Quarter 1: Refine the study design, gather/process data, produce initial results
 - Quarter 2: Complete the analysis and produce an academic-style paper
- The length of a typical completed paper is 5,000-7,500 words (10-15 single-spaced pages, not including 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>
- Class meetings focus on research methods, introductions to computing/writing resources, and student presentations of work in progress (FA26 Thu at 5:00pm)
- The meetings help to provide structure and feedback, but most of the research process will be carried out independently

Typical Steps in the Research Process

- Topic selection
- Identifying 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 Fall 2026 term, but certainly by the end of the Fall 2026 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 **8:00AM, Monday, June 8th, 2026** (issues with the application can be addressed by sending an email to econugadvisor@ucsd.edu)
- 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 **Tuesday, June 30th, 2026**