

A practicum in conducting research in microeconomics (Econ 406); Winter 2025

Professor: Rachel Heath; rmheath@uw.edu

Official meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30 – 5:20 pm, Parrington 160. (Some course meetings will be replaced by out-of-class data collection activities; see schedule below.)

Office hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:20 and by appointment. Format is in-person unless otherwise notified/requested.

Learning objectives: This class aims to give students exposure to research in microeconomics, including human subjects protections, survey design, sample selection, the implementation of experiments, and data analysis.

Course description: Specifically, the class will achieve these objectives through a joint research study that we will conduct in collaboration with Bloodworks NW (<https://bloodworksnw.org/>). This study has two key parts:

1. A survey seeking to understand college students' attitudes around blood donation
2. An experiment assessing the role of different nudges (treatments) in prompting students to sign up to give blood

Students will be involved in the implementation of both parts of the study (as well as associated research procedures, such as IRB approval), as well as analysis of the data that results.

Course assessment:

- Participation in class discussion and research activities (30%): Students should conduct their assigned research activities thoroughly and professionally, and following the designated schedule. During in-class meetings, students should show up prepared and ready to contribute to class discussion.
- Four research inputs proposals (40% all together)
- A final research reflection paper (30%). This has two parts, listed below. (I will give you more specifics as the due date approaches)
 - (1) a policy brief prepared for Bloodworks on the results of this experiment (approximately 5 pages)
 - (2) a reflection on the research process (approximately 3 pages)

Course schedule: The class will be a mix of in-class discussion of related topics (the economics of blood donation and the analysis of survey data and experimental results) and involvement in the implementation of the survey and experiment.

| Date | Topics | Reading(s) and due dates |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Tuesday, January 7, 2025 | Course introduction Analysis of experimental data | Chapter 1 of Mastering 'Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect; Joshua D. Angrist, Jörn-Steffen Pischke; Princeton University Press, Dec 21, 2014. (pdf on canvas) |
| Thursday, January 9, 2025 | Institutional review boards | Research notes on experimental ethics: https://online.stat.psu.edu/stat100/lesson/11/11.2 |
| Tuesday, January 14, 2025 | Economics of blood donation | Iajya, Victor, Nicola Lacetera, Mario Macis, and Robert Slonim. "The effects of information, social and financial incentives on voluntary undirected blood donations: Evidence from a field experiment in Argentina." <i>Social Science & Medicine</i> 98 (2013): 214-223. |
| Thursday, January 16, 2025 | Economics of blood donation | Bloodworks presentation on "Whole Blood Donation Research and Implications for Donor Recruitment Strategy" (July 2023) Due date for research input #1: Human subjects questionnaire |
| Tuesday, January 21, 2025 | Creation and analysis of survey data | |
| Thursday, January 23, 2025 | Wrap-up creation and analysis of survey data Discuss potential treatments Logistics of interviewing | Due date for research input #2: Proposed survey questions and treatments |
| Tuesday, January 28, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Thursday, January 30, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Tuesday, February 4, 2025 | Check in about week one of surveying | No reading, but come prepared to discuss your experiences so far |

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| Thursday, February 6, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | Due date for research input #3: Reflection on surveying so far |
| Tuesday, February 11, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Thursday, February 13, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Tuesday, February 18, 2025 | Check in about surveying | No reading, but come prepared to discuss your experiences so far |
| Thursday, February 20, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Tuesday, February 25, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Thursday, February 27, 2025 | Surveying (no in class meeting) | |
| Tuesday, March 4, 2025 | Work on data analysis together | Optional guide to Stata: https://www.princeton.edu/~otorres/StataTutorial.pdf |
| Thursday, March 6, 2025 | Work on data analysis together | |
| Tuesday, March 11, 2025 | Discuss results of data analysis | Due date for research input #4: Data analysis |
| Thursday, March 13, 2025 | Discuss results of data analysis; class wrap-up | |

The final research reflection paper is due on the last day of exam week (March 21, 2025).

Research procedures (tentative, to be refined pending class discussion and input from Bloodworks)

Given evidence of very low response rates to email solicitations (and the selective natures of volunteers doing surveys online), the class is going to be survey enumerators who recruit

and survey participants in person. We will work out the details as we go, but we will broadly use two approaches. Each student will participate in both methods.

1. Residential recruitment, as in Bursztyn et al (2020). In particular, you will follow a “right-hand rule”, starting by attempting to survey any room/housemates you have, and then proceeding to the right to other rooms/apartments.
2. Random recruitment in Red Square. You will pick a location within Red Square and attempt to survey passers-by. This will be via a sign-up sheet on google documents, since ideally we would avoid multiple course members surveying at the same time.

In both cases, you will record every survey attempt you make, whether or not it results in a successful survey. A day’s surveying quota is either 40 attempts or 20 successful surveys, whichever comes first. Survey attempts and completions will be recorded via Google Forms. As part of the experiment, you will also be giving out flyers that allow participants to sign up to give blood in a blood drive, that contain the experiment testing approach(es) to promote blood donation.