

ECON 456B: Senior Thesis Seminar

Mondays and Wednesdays (2:40 pm-4:00 pm), Pettengill 329

Fridays (2:40 pm-4:00 pm) are reserved as makeup classes when required

Fall 2024

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Anamika Sen (she/her) – please call me Professor Sen

Email: asen@bates.edu

Office: 270 Pettengill Hall

Drop-in hours: Mondays (11 am–noon) and Wednesdays (4:15 pm–5:15 pm). Alternative hours upon request.

COURSE OVERVIEW

While the primary objective of this course is a written thesis, the overarching aim is for you to become proficient in conducting economic research. You will work toward achieving this objective throughout the semester by completing a sequence of assignments culminating in the final thesis. In doing so, you will gain hands-on experience simultaneously conducting economic analysis and writing about and presenting your work. The in-depth nature of the project allows you to iterate on and refine your ideas over the semester, just as you will as professional economists.

Modes of Inquiry (MOI): Historical and Social Inquiry [HS], Quantitative and Formal Reasoning [QF]

Lyceum course link: <https://lyceum.bates.edu/course/view.php?id=7403>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Create a thesis that is a significant, original contribution to the scholarship within economics.
- Identify appropriate data sources, clean data including sample restrictions and creation of new variables, and analyze data using appropriate empirical methodology.
- Present research at various stages, both orally and in writing.
- Discuss the research process with researchers to improve economic thinking and gain experience offering useful critiques of others' work.

PREREQUISITES

You are expected to have completed two 300-level economics courses previously to take this course.

COURSE MATERIALS

Software: The course software includes Stata and access to a server where you can share your files with me. You have two options for accessing this software.

Option 1: Lab computer with Stata and Etna

Option 2: Personal computer with Stata license and Drive download

- Stata license: Student single-user (6-month, State/BE). To buy your license, visit the Stata website <https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/profplus/student-pricing/nodl/>.
- Drive: This app syncs files between your local computer and Google Drive. You can install this app through your bates.edu Google account.

You may also use alternate software (such as R/RStudio) for your programming needs in this course if you prefer.

Data: The department does not have funds to purchase data, but if there is a particular data need, there are some funds via the Dean of Faculty's office that might be helpful. These require an application and funds up to \$300 are available.

References: At various stages of your project, you may find it helpful to refer to econometric texts such as *Mostly Harmless Econometrics* by Joshua D. Angrist & Jörn-Steffen Pischke, or *Causal Inference: The Mixtape* by Scott Cunningham.

COMMUNICATION

Course materials and class updates

All course materials (slides, assignments, etc.) will be posted on Lyceum. Please check frequently for updates. I will also use the class mailing list to communicate any updates/changes to the class. Please check your Bates email regularly for any such communication.

How to reach me?

The best ways to reach me outside of class are either during my weekly drop-in hours or via email. I will typically respond to emails within 48 hours except on weekends and holidays. If an issue is time-sensitive, please mention it as such in the subject line of your email.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance is expected in this class. Attendance will be important not only for your learning but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another. Your presence in class matters. If you need to miss class one day, you are welcome (but not required) to email me and let me know why. However, please note that we will cover new material every class and it is your responsibility to be up to date with the course.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

You may use your laptop or tablet to take notes during lectures. However, that privilege will be lost if I find that you are using them for non-course-related reasons (e.g., news, social media, shopping). Cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced and hidden. Failure to abide by this policy will lower your final grade. If there is an emergency and your phone must be on/visible, please inform me of this at the beginning of class.

ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENT

Thesis & Documentation (75% of final grade): Each of you will complete a sequence of 6 assignments during the semester. A detailed prompt will be provided for each assignment. The assignments are listed below.

Assignment	Percentage	Due date
Annotated Bibliography	6%	September 27
Proposal	6%	October 11
Data & Documentation	11%	October 21
Methods	11%	October 30
Results	11%	November 11
Thesis	30%	December 16

Please adhere to the deadlines for the assignments. If you need to request an extension, email me **before the deadline**, explain the situation, and tell me how much extra time you believe you need. I will not accept late work after 2 days.

Presentations (25% of final grade): There will be 4 presentations throughout the semester. All presentations will be in class. A detailed prompt will be provided for each presentation. Presentations will be on the following dates.

Topic	Percentage	Date
Annotated Bibliography	~4.2%	September 23, 25
Proposal	~4.2%	October 7, 9
Methods & Data	~4.2%	October 23, 28
Final Presentation	12.5%	December 4, 6

You will not be allowed to reschedule a presentation, except under extraordinary circumstances. The reason for this policy is to give everyone equal time to prepare for a presentation, and for each of you to get used to presenting regardless of the state of your project. If you have an extraordinary circumstance that prevents you from giving a presentation on the assigned date, please speak with me as soon as possible.

Poster session: We will participate in the Economics department poster session on **Friday, December 6 at 4:00 pm**. Please reserve this time on your schedule. You should plan to be responsible for paying only the \$40 poster printing fee. If you have trouble affording the materials, please let me know as soon as possible.

GRADING POLICY

Your final grade will be based on the quality of your written assignments and presentations throughout the semester. I will use the following standard to determine your grade.

A-, A	A well-executed, well-presented paper that addresses an interesting question. With a significant amount of additional work, the paper may be publishable in a respectable professional journal. The paper has no moderate or major deficiencies.
B-, B, B+	Quality undergraduate work that includes moderate deficiencies. This includes well-executed papers and presentations that address less-interesting questions. It may also include papers that are not well presented, or which include mediocre technical work. With major work, such a paper might be publishable in a respectable professional journal.
C-, C, C+	Acceptable undergraduate work that includes major deficiencies in the concept, presentation, or technical execution. Papers and presentations that display good effort but fail to meet their objectives may fall into this category. Such papers are generally not publishable.
D, F	Unacceptable papers and presentations. These fundamentally fail to achieve the purpose of the assignments.

Contesting of Grades:

Every effort is made to ensure that grades are accurate and consistent. I do not want to give any student an erroneous grade. If you believe that a grading error has been made, please bring it to my attention promptly after an assignment has been handed back. I will only consider possible grading errors for one week after an assignment has been returned.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All members of the Bates community benefit from an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. You are expected to present your own work and acknowledge the work of others to preserve the integrity of scholarship.

Academic integrity includes:

- Incorporating proper citation of all sources of information
- Submitting your original work
- Not submitting work done for another course to this course

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Copying/purchasing any material from another student, or from another source including open artificial intelligence, that is submitted for grading as your own
- Plagiarism, including the use of Internet material without proper citation
- Submitting your work in one class that was completed for another class (self-plagiarism) without prior permission from the instructor.

USE OF AI TOOLS

The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) is not permitted in this class. Therefore, the use of such AI tools for work in this class will be considered a violation of Bates' Academic Integrity policy, since the work is not your own.

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Topic/Activity	What's due?
Week 1	09/04 – Wednesday Individual Meetings	Syllabus Task
Week 2	09/09 – Monday Individual Meetings Constructing a bibliography 09/11 – Wednesday NO CLASS	
Week 3	09/16 – Monday Introduction What does a “good” thesis look like? 09/18 – Wednesday What makes a research question “good”?	Annotated Summary
Week 4	09/23 – Monday Presentation: Annotated Bibliography 09/25 – Wednesday Presentation: Annotated Bibliography 09/27 – Friday NO CLASS	Annotated Bibliography
Week 5	09/30 – Monday Individual Meetings 10/02 – Wednesday Individual Meetings	
Week 6	10/07 – Monday Presentation: Proposal 10/09 – Wednesday Presentation: Proposal 10/11 – Friday NO CLASS	Proposal
Week 7	10/14 – Monday Data workshop	
10/16-20	NO CLASS – Fall recess	
Week 8	10/21 – Monday Methods workshop 10/23 – Wednesday Presentation: Methods & Data	Data & Documentation
Week 9	10/28 – Monday Presentation: Methods & Data 10/30 – Wednesday NO CLASS	Methods
Week 10	11/04 – Monday Individual Meetings 11/06 – Wednesday Individual Meetings	
Week 11	11/11 – Monday Results workshop 11/13 – Wednesday Individual Meetings	Results
Week 12	11/18 – Monday Individual Meetings 11/20 – Wednesday Poster workshop	
11/23-12/1	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving recess	
Week 14	12/02 – Monday NO CLASS 12/04 – Wednesday Practice Presentations 12/06 – Friday Final Presentation: Poster session	Submit poster by end of the day to Post & Print
Week 16	12/16 – Monday NO CLASS	Thesis

Disclaimer: This outline is intended to give you guidance on what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, I reserve the right to modify, supplement, and make changes as the course needs arise. Any changes will be communicated via email and in class.

ACCESSIBILITY

It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate any issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please meet with me outside of class so we can explore potential options. Students with disabilities may also wish to work with the Office of Accessible Education to discuss a range of options for removing barriers in this course, including official accommodations. Please visit their website for contact and additional information: <https://www.bates.edu/accessible-education/>. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the Office of Accessible Education, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

This course is intended to serve students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. I will try my best so that all students' learning needs can be addressed both in and out of class. It is an important part of my teaching philosophy that the diversity that students bring to class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is always my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings or deadlines conflict with your religious events, please let me know within the first three weeks of the semester so that we can accommodate you. Finally, all people have the right to be addressed and referred to by their personal identity. In this class, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify the pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. I will do my best to address and refer to everyone accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY

I am committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity and supports inclusivity. We need to work together to build this community of learning. To this end, I ask all members of this class to:

- Be open to and interested in the views of others
- Consider the possibility that your views may change over the term
- Be aware that this course could ask you to reconsider some “common sense” notions you may hold
- Honor the unique life experiences of your peers
- Appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other
- Listen to each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- Keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature

STUDENT RESOURCES

There are multiple resources available to help you succeed in this course. Please take advantage of my drop-in hours. These are times when you can just come in and no scheduling is needed. If you cannot make it to my drop-in hours, don't hesitate to contact me to set up an appointment.

I also recommend using the services provided by the **Student Writing & Language Center (SWLC)**, which provides a supportive environment for you to understand and generate ideas for your writing assignments in any subject or course; to draft, revise, and edit your writing for any purpose, context, or audience; to practice and get feedback on your oral presentations; and to study or practice writing and communicating. SWLC is located in the Peer Learning Commons (PLC) on the Ground Floor of Ladd Library. You are invited to stop by SWLC anytime they're open to meet with a writing or language tutor. You can also search for subject-specific support hours or make appointments with a tutor using the Penji app: <https://web.penjiapp.com/>. For more information, please visit www.bates.edu/swlc. Or, email swlc@bates.edu to ask additional questions.