Course Information

Instructor: Alfred Kong

Office: Iona 011
Office Hours: Monday 4:00 to 5:00pm
               Thursday 2:00 to 3:00pm
Email: alfred.kong@ubc.ca

Class Time:
Monday     3:00-4:00pm
Wednesday 3:00-4:00pm
Friday     3:00-4:00pm

Note: This course will not meet in the classroom every week. See the meeting schedule at
the end of this course outline.

Course Location: Buchanan D325 (Classroom) or B126 (Computer Labs)

Course website: On Canvas (http://canvas.ubc.ca)

All students are personally responsible for familiarizing themselves with several important University polices at the University of British Columbia:

Standards for academic honesty:
http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0

Academic accomodations for students with disabilities:
http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,34,0,0

Religious accomodations:
http://equity.ubc.ca/days-of-significance/

Course Description

Selected problems and issues in the theory and practice of Economics. Each section will focus on
a different field. Restricted to Economics Majors, and Combined Majors in Economics their final
academic session.

Prerequistics: All of ECON 325, ECON 326 and one of ECON 301, ECON 304 and one of
ECON 302, ECON 305.
**Course Summary**

This section introduces students to research in health economics. The course will be divided into two parts. The first part will discuss some interesting research done in health economics such as research on height and income and review some statistical techniques students have learnt previously in Econ 325 and 326.

In the second part, students will apply their knowledge acquired from the first part on completing a major research paper related to health economics. Students will present their findings to the class in a 15-20 minute presentation during the final weeks of the course. The final paper will be due at the end of term.

**Required Materials**

There is no required textbook for this course. The software package STATA will be used in the labs and for the assignments and paper. This software is found on the machines in the Buchanan computer labs. It is also available for purchase at a special rate on campus. Details about purchasing STATA will be made available in class and on the course website.

**Course Organization**

This course is designed around the completion of an independent research paper. The course has three different phases: lectures and labs, individual work, and presentations.

Lectures and Labs: During the first five to six weeks of classes, we will regularly meet as a class and I will introduce you to research in health economics, lecture on the econometric techniques that are necessary for you to conduct your research and teach you essential STATA techniques in the computer lab. The lectures and labs will be very important in helping you choose your research topic and finish your paper.

Individual Work: After the lecture phase is over, we will not meet as a class until the last two weeks of the term. You will be expected to use this time to conduct research on your own, keeping in touch with me by e-mail and/or meeting with me individually from time to time. For more information on my expectation on your project, read the document “Major Research Paper Template” on the course website.

Presentations: During the last two weeks of the term, we will meet together again as a class and you will present your work to your classmates. For more information on this, read the “Presentation Guide” on the course website.
**Evaluation**

Assignments

1) Research Proposal 10% Due 28th September
2) Literature Review 5% Due 5th October

Presentation 15% End of November
Final Paper 60% Friday, 30th November
Participation 10%

**Final Paper Submission**

On 30th November 2018, you will need to submit a hard copy of your final paper in class, and electronic copies of your STATA do file and log file to me by email.

You will also need to upload an electronic copy of your final paper to [http://turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) by that time.

To create an account on turnitin, you need to enter the following information:
Class ID: 18785256
Enrollment Key: UBC12345

**Plagiarism**

Any plagiarized work will receive a grade of zero and will be referred to the University for further disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to insure that any work handed in is your own work and complies with the University’s policies on academic honesty and plagiarism as stated in the Academic Calendar. University sanctions for plagiarism can include a 1 year suspension (and associated delay of graduation) and a permanent note on your record. The following websites have detailed information on the University’s academic honesty policies and as well as helpful tips for avoiding plagiarism.

[http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/guide-to-academic-integrity/](http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/guide-to-academic-integrity/)
[http://www.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0#15620](http://www.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0#15620)
## Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>D325</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Basic Econometric Techniques</td>
<td>D325</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research in Health Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Monday and Wednesday: Individual Meetings</td>
<td>Iona 011</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Friday: STATA Techniques</td>
<td>B126</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monday: Individual Meetings</td>
<td>Iona 011</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday and Friday: STATA Techniques</td>
<td>B126</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Monday: <strong>No class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday and Friday: STATA Techniques</td>
<td>B126</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Classes might be scheduled depending on progress</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>No Class</strong></td>
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<td><strong>No Class</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>D325</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>D325</td>
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Readings

Bold papers will be discussed in lecture. Students are strongly encouraged to read papers before the class in which they will be discussed. Other papers listed are a good starting place for anyone writing their paper in that area.

Introduction to Health Economics:


Obesity:


Smoking:


Alcohol and Drug Use:


**Other Topics:**


Major Research Paper Template
Seminar in Applied Economics: Health Economics

The focus of the semester’s work is a major research paper. The paper will include original analytical as well as empirical analysis, drawing on a variety of sources. A complete description of the topics, format, and evaluation of the paper appears below.

A. Topics

The common topic for the papers in this section will be the analysis of causes and/or consequences of obesity, smoking or alcohol and substance use among children. At the end of this document, there is a list of pre-approved topics that may be studied. Other topics may be selected with prior approval of the instructor.

B. Paper Structure

The structure of the paper should follow the outline provided here. The paper will be evaluated in part by how successfully this outline is followed. The approximate page-count for each section is provided as a guide. If the writer is more concise or the topic reasonably demands more space, then fewer or more pages may be allocated to each section without penalty.

1. Introduction (around 1-2 pages)
   • Brief introduction describing what will appear in the essay.
   • Why the topic that you have chosen is interesting

2. Descriptive information (around 3-4 pages)
   • This section of the paper must provide a description of the current prevalence of the chosen health issue. Using the resources discussed in class, details such as
     ➢ The prevalence of the chosen health issue
     ➢ What are the possible causes and consequences?
     ➢ How to measure?
     ➢ Policies that aim to combat the health issue should be addressed.
     ➢ What data are you using?
     ➢ What are the dependent and independent variables in your model?
   Note: Not all of the above questions can be applied to all topics.

3. Literature review (around 2 pages)
   • Researchers have studied most of the health issues discussed in class. In this section, the existing research should be summarized. Possible sources of existing research include academic journal articles and books, think-tank reports, and research by government agencies.
   • The focus should be on more recent research.

4. Empirical and Critical Analysis (around 5-6 pages)
   • Using microdata, the paper should present original empirical analysis on the chosen health issue. For most of the topics, using the General Social Survey (GSS) or the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) should suffice.
The primary question the empirical work with the microdata should attempt to address is who is affected by the chosen health issue. In other words, your analysis should begin by being descriptive.

- For example, one way to do this is to create a table or a graph that shows how the prevalence of the chosen health issue varies by family income groups. Divide the sample into 4 or 5 groups by family income and then show how the prevalence of the health issue varies by income. This analysis could be repeated by parents’ education, family size, province, or any other descriptive variable that is interesting for your topic.

- Regressions can be run that aim to answer your question of interest.
  - You can use basic regression models such as OLS or Probit, depending on your dependent variable.

- In addition to the basic analysis described above, an extension consisting of a focused analytical question could be presented.
- The paper should assess the causes or consequences of the chosen health issue, drawing on the descriptive and empirical evidence gathered in the previous sections of the paper and from the lectures. Possible questions that could be answered are:
  - Do your findings match the results from related research?
  - What are the policy implications of your findings?

5. Conclusion (around 1 page)
- Summarize the findings of the research paper.

C. Evaluation

The evaluation is based on both the degree of difficulty and the degree of success will be considered. Part of the ‘degree of difficulty’ will be the availability of other research and data on the chosen health issue – some topics have more related resources than others.

The paper will be assessed along two dimensions:

1. Completeness and clarity
   - A complete paper is delivered punctually and covers all of the requested points described above. There is no prescribed word count for the paper, but a complete paper will likely be between 3500 to 4500 words, not including graphs, tables, and figures.
   - A clear paper is free of spelling and grammar mistakes, is well-structured, and conveys written, tabular, and graphical information successfully.

2. Depth and content
   - A deep paper not only covers all requested topics, but does so with strong analysis and economic reasoning.
D. Plagiarism

The submitted paper must be original and produced by the student. There is no tolerance in this course for plagiarism. Students should review the Faculty of Arts policies on plagiarism, available at https://artsone.arts.ubc.ca/about-arts-one/ubc-policies/ubc-plagiarism-policy/

E. Notes on style

1. Please double space.
2. Font size 12
3. Page numbers must be used.
4. ‘Data’ is a plural word. E.g. ‘The data were analyzed.’
5. Report a sensible number of digits.
6. References should be in the style of an economics journal.
7. Papers submitted electronically should be in one document.

F. Suggested Topic List

Relationship between one of the health issues (obesity, smoking, alcohol and substance use) and

1) Physical Activity
2) Friendship
3) School Performance
4) Parent Weight Status
5) Self-Esteem
6) Depression
7) Family Income
8) Parents’ Education
**Presentation Guide**  
**Seminar in Applied Economics: Health Economics**

This is a guide for your major presentation. The presentation is worth 15 percent of your final grade, so it is worth some effort. The presentation should be between 12 and 14 minutes. Your time will be uninterrupted, but there will be time for questions from the audience following the presentation.

You are strongly encouraged to attend your classmates’ presentations. As mentioned before, my assessment of your participation mark for ECON 490 will be informed by your attendance at your classmates’ presentations.

The presentations will take place during the last two weeks of the term. They will be held in BUCH D325, during normal class time. We will do a lottery to determine your presentation date in class in week 2.

The earliest of these dates is more than a week before the written paper is due. I do not expect your paper to be completely done when you make your presentation. For those presenting closer to the paper deadline, I will expect a more complete analysis. One advantage of going earlier is that you will have a chance to receive feedback from me and from your classmates before you submit your paper.

Below, there are four pieces of information for you about the presentation.

A. About electronic presentations.  
B. Hints for style  
C. Hints for presentation content  
D. Grading scheme  

A. About Electronic Presentations
   - You must make an electronic presentation. I will provide a laptop and projector.  
   - You should email your presentation to me one day before (or earlier) your presentation and also bring your presentation on a flash memory key to the class, just in case.  
   - The presentation can be in MSWord, a PDF file, or Powerpoint. Your choice.  
   - Your grade will not depend on a ‘flashy’ presentation. Clarity and content are much more important – and might be best conveyed in a simpler presentation.

B. On Style:
Here are some hints on preparing your talk:
   - use big fonts (16pt at least)  
   - for tables, don’t try to put too much on one slide  
   - for graphs, make sure you label each axis clearly  
   - do not write full sentences  
   - use bullet points instead  
   - only 4 or 5 bullet points per slide

C. Content
This is a rough guide to the content you should cover. Depending on your topic, some items mentioned here may not be relevant to your paper. The time indicated in parentheses is a rough guide of how long you should spend on each part.

For the most part, you should simply follow the structure of your paper.
1. Introduction (1 minute)
   - Introduce your topic
   - Explain why your topic is interesting for economists

2. Background on the health issue (3 minutes)
   - Describe how serious is the problem
     - Canada vs other countries
     - policies that our government used to tackle this issue

3. Literature review (2 minutes)
   - Brief summary of main reference paper(s).

4. Data (2 minutes)
   - Present information about your data
   - The name of the survey
   - What sample selection criteria are you using?
     - That is, what observations (if any) did you drop?
   - What variables are you creating from your data?

5. Analysis of the data (4 minutes)
   - discuss and show the means etc. for some of your key variables
     - don’t need to show all of them for the presentation, just the key ones.
   - If possible with your data, graph some key variable in a compelling way.
   - If you have some regression output to report, make a table with the results
     - make sure to write out your regression equation
     - do not use raw STATA output

6. Summary (1 minute)
   - Summarize your findings
   - Offer any concluding thoughts.

D. Grading Scheme
   - On time (2 marks)
     - between 12 and 14 minutes
   - Completeness (2 marks)
     - covers the items described above that are relevant to the topic
   - Style (5 marks)
     - speaks clearly
     - well prepared
     - information is conveyed effectively
   - Content (6 marks)
     - the quality of research so far
     - depth of understanding of the topic
     - understanding of the data analysis presented