

AAE 720: Seminar in Quantitative and Applied Economics

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Semester: Fall 2025

Credits: 1

Course Designations and Attributes: Graduate Level Course in AAE

Meeting Days & Times and Location:

The class meets on Mondays, from 9:00am to 10:00am, starting September 8th and ending on December 8th. We will meet in [Taylor Hall Room B30](#).

Instructional Mode: Face-to-face lectures

How Credit Hours are met by the Course: This class meets for 60 minutes every week over the Fall semester. Students will work on course learning activities for about 60 minutes out of the classroom for every class period (i.e., 60 minutes per week throughout the semester, on average).

INSTRUCTOR

Name: Jordan van Rijn, Ph.D.

Availability: I will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 2:00pm – 3:00pm and Wednesdays from 10:30am – 11:30am in Taylor Hall room 318. You can also schedule appointments with me at other times if you are not available during office hours.

Email/Preferred Contact: Please put “[AAE 720]” into the subject line of all correspondence. I will strive for same day replies during the week and within 48 hours on weekends and during vacation periods.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

The AAE 720 seminar course consists of presentations from industry professionals and academics on various topics related to the field of quantitative and applied economics. The course will also cover topics related to effective presentation and verbal communication skills.

Prerequisites

Graduate-level standing. Students are strongly encouraged to have prior knowledge of intermediate or advanced statistics (or econometrics), and microeconomic theory.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is intended to help MSPO students apply the knowledge they've gained from courses in statistics and microeconomics by practicing listening to and evaluating presentations on topics related to quantitative and applied economics. A critical skill is to be able to understand an economic argument, identify the statistical approach used, understand why that particular approach was used, and appreciate any particular strengths and limitations of a specific economic argument or econometric methodology.

Another critical skill in the economics profession is to learn how to effectively communicate ideas to a diverse audience. For example, economists are regularly expected to present at seminars, board meetings, conferences, or give interviews to the media. Since these audiences may or may not have experience with economics and quantitative methods, it is important to learn how to present data, statistical analysis, and economic theory and concepts in simple and clear language. Therefore, a secondary goal of this course is to help MSPO students gain presentation skills and experience, and to learn effective forms of verbal communication. This will be achieved through learning from the textbooks and instructor, observing and learning from the examples of a variety of outside presenters from industry and academia, and preparing for and performing your own presentation.

Specifically, this course has the following learning outcomes:

- Gain experience and skills at actively listening to and evaluating the arguments and methods of presentations from industry and academia;
- Master the vocabulary relevant to an economics topic, understand the economic context for the issue, and pros/cons associated with potential solutions;
- Develop professional presentation and verbal communication skills through presentation examples and practice.

GRADING

- Quiz: 20%
- Presentation outline: 20%
- 3-minutes thesis: 10%
- Presentation: 30%
- Questions Assignment: 10%
- Class attendance & participation: 10%

Final letter grades may be curved upward, but a minimum guarantee is made of an A for 93 or above, AB for 87 or above, B for 80 or above, BC for 75 or above, C for 70 or above, and D for 60 or above.

QUIZ

- There will be approximately 4 – 5 outside presenters from industry and academia. In order to encourage your active listening and participation during their presentations, there will be a quiz on **November 10th** to test your knowledge of their presentation material, including any associated PowerPoint slides and papers. This will constitute 20% of your grade.

PRESENTATION

- Each student is responsible for giving a 10-15-minute presentation during the final 4 - 5 classes of the course. I will provide more instructions about this in a separate document, but the presentation will cover a topic of your choice related to applied economics. The presentation can be of one of two formats: 1) Presentation of someone else's economics paper that uses econometric analysis; or 2) Presentation of your original analysis that uses statistical, econometric or graphical analysis. You will be graded on both your presentation and your presentation slides. Overall, the presentation represents 30% of your grade.

PRESENTATION OUTLINE:

- By **October 6th**, you are expected to choose a presentation topic and approve it with the instructor. You will also need to provide a presentation outline of your main argument/s and supporting points. I will provide more instructions about this in a separate document. The presentation topic and outline will constitute 20% of your grade.

3-MINUTE THESIS / ELEVATOR PITCH:

- In addition, on **October 6th** you will give a 3-minute presentation about your proposed research topic. You are not allowed any PowerPoint or other slides for this assignment! This assignment is intended to help you get comfortable presenting in front of your peers, and practice giving a brief, informal summary of your research idea. You should briefly (within 3 minutes) answer the following questions in your presentation: What is your research question? Why is this topic important? What is your main hypothesis or conclusion? This is worth 10% of your grade.

QUESTIONS ASSIGNMENT:

- In addition to presentation skills, an important related skill is the ability to ask helpful and effective questions to seminar presenters, professors, colleagues and other students. To that end, you are expected to ask at least 1 - 2 questions to the seminar presenters throughout the semester. To receive full credit for your questions, you must ask questions that 1) demonstrate that you actively listened to the presentation; 2) help advance the conversation, clarify a point, apply or extend the material beyond the presentation, or offer career advice and experience; and 3) are distinct from other students' questions. Keep in mind that questions should not be used to "show off", stump or otherwise make the speaker feel uncomfortable but should be of benefit to the audience while encouraging the presenter. I will try to leave enough time for questions at the end of each presentation so that every student has the opportunity to ask at least one question.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

- It is very helpful for you and other students if we can create as collaborative and interactive a learning environment as possible. In many ways, you are all in the best position to support each other, help each other learn, and provide feedback to each other. Therefore, you are expected to attend each class and actively participate in class discussion. This includes actively listening, asking questions to outside presenters and the instructor, providing feedback to students on their

presentations, responding to questions from the instructor or other presenters, and otherwise actively participating in class. I will also provide evaluation sheets for each presenter (including students) that each student is expected to fill out. If you are unable to attend class due to an emergency or other unforeseen circumstances, please let me know as soon as possible (ideally *before* class).

- *Note:* For Fall 2025 there will be some weeks without any presentations by students or outside presenters. During these weeks or another time throughout the semester, you should attend at least one AAE seminar and also fill out an evaluation form for that presentation. The AAE Department holds many seminars throughout the semester with professors and experts from our department and from around the world, and this is a great opportunity to see how PhD economists present their research. (However, don't get discouraged if you don't understand everything in the presentation!). You can see the schedule of AAE seminars [here](#).

Late Assignments: For assignments that require an uploaded document in Canvas, you may turn them in past the deadline, but I will deduct 10% of the total grade for each day that they are turned in past the deadline for up to three days. After that, you will receive a zero on the assignment. For presentations, you must show up on the assigned day or will receive a 20% deduction and must reschedule it as soon as possible. However, please let me know if you have any extenuating circumstances—especially if you are ill or have a health or family emergency—and I will do my best to accommodate your situation.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

- [How to Give a Speech: EASY-TO-LEARN SKILLS for Successful Presentations, Speeches, Pitches, Lectures, and More!](#), Gary Genard, Gedar & Maitland Press, 2016
 - I recommend reading Chapters 1, 3 - 7, and 9
 - I will provide PowerPoint slides that summarize some of the main points of the textbook. Therefore, the textbook is not required, but it is strongly recommended. There will be a copy of the textbook held on reserve at the UW-Madison library.
- [Doing Economics: What You Should Have Learned in Grad School—But Didn't by Marc Bellemare](#).
 - I recommend reading chapter 3: *Giving Talks* (I will share a PDF version of this chapter). But I will also cover this material in class and in my PowerPoint slides. There will be a copy of the textbook held on reserve at the UW-Madison library.
- [On Dialogue by David Bohm](#).
 - This is a classic text on communication and dialogue. It is not required reading but highly recommended. I will cover some concepts from this book at the beginning of the semester in my PowerPoint slides. There will be a copy of the textbook held on reserve at the UW-Madison library.

COURSE TIMELINE

Date	Topic
09/08	Introduction to class / Syllabus Review
09/15	Science, Dialogue and the Economist: Part 1 Recommended reading: 1. Bohm Chs. 1 - 3
09/22	Science, Dialogue and the Economist: Part 2 Recommended reading: 1. Bohm Chs. 4 - 7
09/29	Effective presentation skills Recommended reading: 1. Genard, Chapters 1, 3 - 7, and 9 2. Bellemare, Chapter 3
10/06	3-Minute Thesis Presentations Tasks: Presentation topic & outline due
10/13	Presentations from industry / academia
10/20	Presentations from industry / academia
10/27	Presentations from industry / academia
11/03	Presentations from industry / academia
11/10	Quiz on presentations & lectures
11/17	Student presentations
11/24	Student presentations
12/01	Student presentations
12/08	Student presentations

RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- See the Guide's [Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: "The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA."

<http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Institutional statement on diversity: "Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world." <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>