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High-Performing Student Opportunities

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Looking for more advanced Economics coursework? Here are some opportunities to broaden and deepen your understanding of the field:

Graduate-Level Microeconomics Sequence

If you're considering graduate school, or just want a credible signal for your CV that you can handle advanced quantitatively demanding material, consider the graduate-level microeconomics track—ECON 500, 501, and 508.

To enroll, students generally need strong performance in the upper-division theory and quantitative courses such as ECON 400, 401, 482. If you have a solid academic record, the process is straightforward: email the two professors teaching the sequence that quarter, briefly introduce your background, and request an add-code. While there are no formal prerequisites beyond instructor permission, certain courses make the transition far smoother.

Classes like real analysis and linear algebra are a good foundation for the level of mathematics expected. The sequence spans three quarters, broken into four intensive 7.5-week modules, each taught by a different faculty member:

1. Consumer and Producer Theory — Prof. Quan Wen

A rigorous treatment of preferences, demand, and production, heavy on proofs and optimization.

2. General Equilibrium — Prof. Xu Tan

A mathematically dense introduction to competitive equilibrium, welfare theorems, and market models, building on the tools of the first module.

3. Game Theory — Prof. Jacques Lawarrée

Various equilibria, Bayesian games, and repeated games, with an emphasis on logic and formal reasoning.

4. Contract Theory — Prof. Fahad Khalil

Incentives, asymmetric information, and signaling, blending conceptual intuition with technical modeling.

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Graduating Seniors Exit Interview

Q: What advice would you give to people who are just starting the economics major? To undergraduate students in general?

Kotaro: The economics major is very flexible, but it is easy to get lost in all of the class options. I would tell new economics majors to take ownership early and explore the different career paths that the major can offer. It's okay not to know what you want to do immediately, but through talking with classmates, professors, and alumni, you can get a sense of how economics applies to all kinds of fields like consulting, policy, finance, data science, and research. Once you see the possibilities, it becomes much easier to choose classes with intention instead of just checking boxes. I remember taking ECON 487 my junior year and being really stretched by the amount of coding it required. As I persevered through that class, I ended up falling in love with the process. That foundation allowed me to write my research thesis, succeed in econometrics competitions, and help compile results for a medical study. If you take classes that explore your interests in this field, the path you want to follow will become clear.

Max: Do the optional things—go to public lectures (economics or otherwise), take random classes outside of your majors/minors, things like that. I think that undergrad is first and foremost about honing in on what you want your career to be, and you need to explore to make that happen. If you think that you already know what you want your career to be, then you definitely need to be exploring, to challenge that belief. You don't know what you don't know.

Alexa: For students just accepted into the major, I would pay attention to the cool opportunities within the major you are available to. Go to EUB events or apply to the EUB yourself! There are opportunities to network with professors, other econ students, alumni and industry professionals. Also look into the Econ mentorship program, stay posted on the Econjobs email list you receive from the department, and study abroad exchanges. I studied Econ abroad for 4 months in Tokyo, and it was a life changing experience. It was also much cheaper than studying at UW Seattle and I took 6 classes in that time.

Graduating Seniors Exit Interview

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Q: *What has been the most impactful or formative moment at UW for you?*

Zayna: Before entering UW, I believed what many others believe about economics: that it is solely the bland and heartless study of wealth (i.e. stocks and finances). The first time my belief was challenged was during the quiz section for ECON 200, one of the last classes of my first quarter as an undergraduate student. My TA had just finished the content review for the final exam. He then paused and said to us, "Students, as you dive deeper into economics and empower yourself with the tools it provides, I urge you to use those tools for the betterment of society. For economics is at its most powerful when it is used for friendship, happiness, justice, and love." Though his words held weight for me then, I didn't fully understand its meaning until I took later courses and discovered that economics is about more than material wealth, it is a vehicle for improving quality of life, explaining aspects about humanity that make us special, fostering connections, and more. Now, as I leave UW, taking the last classes of my final quarter as an undergraduate student, I look to the future hoping to embody this principle: using economics to spread the wealth of friendship, happiness, justice, and love.

Vincent: The true "arts & sciences" rite of passage to me was going from learning about the formula for price level calculation in ECON 301 to discussing Milton's treatment of Man's transgression in the English class right after. I cannot imagine a more revelational instance of disorientation.

Max: The most formative moment at UW for me was rushing the field at Husky Stadium after Oregon muffed a would-be game-winning field goal on October 14th, 2023 at 4:25 PM.

Q: *Did you come into UW/the economics major with an idea of what you wanted to do when you graduate? What affirmed your decision or made you change your mind?*

Vincent: I was initially drawn towards Economics for the inexhaustible potential that, in my ignorant eyes, it seemed to promise: the absurd image of a spectacled man waving his pen over an impossible graph and, with a wonderful flash, Poverty is eradicated forevermore. While I confess that this belief of mine prevails today, the crowning cause behind my fascination with the subject has evolved as I went on to learn more. Namely, it is the power of Economics to work with human tendencies and rationales. An Economist, even with surgical precision, may be surprised by the real world outcome because in addition to data and equations, the subject deals with the fickle hearts of man, the true value of a variable that can only ever be speculated.

I go so far as to claim that there does not exist a successful Economist to whom the intimate minds of her fellow humans are entirely foreign. This, I believe, is what finally exalts Economics above all other adjacent studies. Regardless of the exact profession, it is the immutable objective of all who study Economics to better the lives of people (despite the at times paternalistic air one might detect), and I encourage those who are starting the major to keep this constantly in mind in all their endeavors.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Economics Quiz Bowl
Team up and test your Econ
knowledge in a game of quiz bowl
Thursday, May 19th
5:30–7:00 PM
SAV 138

Paul Heyne Seminar
*Critical Minerals and Rethinking the
Role of the State during the Green Energy
Transition*
Debamanyu Das
Thursday, May 21st
5:30–7:00 PM
SAV 155

Amazon PhD Q&A Panel
TBD

JOIN THE EUB DISCORD

Join our community of UW Econ
undergraduates and get updates from
the EUB on tutoring, events and other
department information.



Alexa: When I first joined the major, I was undecided between a lot of different paths. Econ is so versatile, so I wanted to consider many different things. Then I enrolled in Econ 408 in the Spring with Christina Tapia. This was the perfect course for Econ majors looking to figure out their career path; Tapia has so many amazing guest speakers come in to give testimonials on their own career pathways in addition to being an informative practical class on Law and Economics. I came out of that class determined that I want to pursue Economic consulting and am pursuing a masters' in DC to further my career path.

Max: I came in knowing that I wanted to study economics, because it seemed like the most rigorous of the social sciences. Beyond that, I really had no idea where to go with it. It was actually an anthropology class I took sophomore year that clarified things for me, about the economic development of East Asia—it was a fascinating case study that really illustrated how the nuances of economic policy can have drastic impacts on people's lives for better or worse. That class pushed me in the direction of economic research and/or public sector employment, which is the path I'm still on.

High-Performing Student Opportunities

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The cohort is small, typically 30–35 students, and mostly composed of PhD students from Economics and Foster. This year, there were 2 undergraduates in 500 and 501, and 4 in 508. Despite the intimidating structure, the environment is collaborative and surprisingly welcoming. Graduate students are generous with advice and career insights, and the sequence becomes a natural place to build connections with people who are ahead of you academically. The sequence is demanding, but it's also one of the most rewarding academic experiences available to undergraduates.

Research in the Departmental Honors Program

The Economics Departmental Honors Program is the primary avenue by which undergraduate economics majors can get firsthand research experience. This three-course series starts in spring quarter with a seminar series, and continues through the fall and winter quarters of the subsequent year. In the fall you'll develop a research question and write a literature review and research proposal, and in the winter (and often extending into the spring) you'll conduct the research and write the thesis itself.

You can start the honors sequence in your sophomore or junior year, thus finishing the thesis in the junior or senior year, respectively. If you start in your sophomore year, you'll be done by the time you're applying to jobs or graduate schools, which may be to your benefit. However, starting early means that you'll have less time to prepare. While there are no official prerequisites beyond ECON 300 and 301, almost every honors student undertakes an applied microeconomics project (read: regressions), so econometrics classes like ECON 482 or 483 are highly recommended. I recommend ECON 488 Causal Inference—this class really gets to the heart of how to prove that A causes B, which is the problem at the core of pretty much any research project. In our experience, the most crucial step of the research process in the honors program is the selection of your question. The question you choose needs to fulfill several criteria in order for your project to be as successful and pain-free as possible: it needs to actually be answerable with readily available data (you'll only have around five months to conduct the project,

and you'll find that a staggering proportion of that meager allotment of time is spent wrangling data), and it needs to be interesting enough that you're excited to work on it. As an undergraduate, the frank truth is that you'll almost certainly be using relatively basic econometric techniques, and in that environment a strong and well-formulated question can really set your work apart.

Complementary Classes in Other Departments

If you intend to continue on to graduate school, you'll need more mathematics courses than what is required to graduate with an Economics BS. If your educational journey ends with your BA or BS, it's still worth considering taking higher level math courses simply to prove to prospective employers that you're up to the task. Topics like real analysis (MATH 327) and matrix algebra (MATH 208; MATH 318) are particularly worthwhile, as tools from these areas of math end up getting borrowed into high level economics material. The data science minor also offers a wide range of courses that will supplement quantitative learning often not taught within the department. Classes in geography, statistics, and informatics all give the experience needed in modeling, computation, and real-world data.

Lastly, classes that examine subject areas within the purview of economics but with a different lens can be insightful in their own right. A single topic (say, unemployment) will be looked at in a unique way depending on whether you're learning about it from an economist, sociologist, anthropologist, historian, or public policy expert, and this kaleidoscope of perspectives can enrich your understanding. I've had a lot of great classes about economics-adjacent topics from JSIS, ANTH, and PUBPOL, and I'd highly recommend seeking out classes in your areas of interest outside of the economics department to complement your economics coursework.

Paul Heyne Seminar Recap: Rachel Heath on Monitoring Harassment

PHOEBE THIO

Each quarter, the EUB hosts the Paul Heyne Seminar, an event designed to bring economic research out of academic journals to an undergraduate audience. By inviting faculty members and guest speakers, students are given front-row seats to the kind of work their professors are doing, taking the theory they've learned in classrooms and seeing it applied to real-world problems. This quarter, the EUB invited Rachel Heath, the Alberta C. Corkery Professor of Economics at UW, who tackled the timely question: how can organizations effectively monitor and prevent harassment?

The question sounds simple but turns out to be quite complex, because how do you get people to report workplace harassment when they're afraid of retaliation? Workers who file complaints may face physical or mental abuse outside of work from their manager or even be punished within the workplace. When victims and witnesses are hesitant to come forward out of concern for possible retaliation and their own reputational damage, it becomes difficult for organizations to reliably assess the scope and nature of the harassment and act on it. For example, organizations can't accurately answer how prevalent harassment is, how many employees are responsible, or how isolated the victims are across teams.

Partnering with an apparel manufacturer in Bangladesh, Heath conducted phone-based surveys with over 2,000 garment workers and found that simply adding some plausible deniability to the survey increased reports of threatening behavior by 46%, sexual harassment by 269%, and other physical harassment by 288%. Garbling, where positive responses are recorded truthfully and negative responses are potentially recorded as positive with some probability, dramatically increases reporting and reduces measurement error in key statistics. While garbling does introduce some noise, Heath argues that strategic misreporting is unlikely to occur. Workers still face psychological and social costs when filing reports, even with added anonymity. Hence, the method actually corrects the bigger problem of severe under-reporting and improves the data.

With garbling, the questions previously raised can be answered. As it turns out, harassment is widespread. Of the workforce, 13.6% reported threatening behavior, 5.7% physical harassment, and 7.7% sexual harassment. Only 5–27% of managers were estimated not to have harassed workers, and victims were often isolated within their teams, especially for physical or sexual harassment. By having a clearer picture, organizations are able to design policies and take action that match the problem they face.

For students who'd like to learn how economics can be applied outside of textbook models, Heath's work showed

how the same tools, thinking about incentives, strategic behavior, and information, with a healthy dose of econometrics can tackle real policy concerns.

If you're interested in seeing how else economics can be used in the real world, look no further than the next Paul Heyne Seminar, featuring Debamanyu Das from the Jackson School of International Studies at UW. He will be speaking on "Critical Minerals and Rethinking the Role of the State during the Green Energy Transition" on Thursday, May 21, at 5:30PM in Savery 155.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Economics Tutoring

The EUB offers free tutoring every weekday at various times every quarter! Check the schedule on the EUB website to see tutoring times. If you need help with an upper-level class, however, make sure you check the website to see which tutor can help.

The application to the EUB 2026-2027 is now closed. Thank you to all who applied and we look forward to welcoming our new members soon!

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