Special Needs
Please inform me during the first week of class if you have any conditions that may limit or affect your ability to participate in this course so that we can make necessary arrangements. Please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), in the 707 Building (11th and Wisconsin), Room 503; phone (8-1645) for more information (see also: http://www.marquette.edu/disability-services/).

Emergency Plan
Every Marquette University campus building has emergency shelter and evacuation plans. Please familiarize yourself with the plans of each building in which you take classes or attend meetings. Make sure to note the routes to the lowest level of the buildings for shelter during inclement weather, as well as exits from the buildings in the event of fire or other emergency.

Attendance Statement
The Marquette University Graduate School of Management considers regular class attendance an important component of the learning process. Students are expected to attend scheduled class meetings; excessive absences may have adverse consequences, ranging from a lowered course grade to forced withdrawal from the course. Excessive absence is generally defined as missing more than 10-15 percent of the regularly scheduled class time. Please consult the instructor’s course syllabus for additional details regarding a particular course. For this section of ECON 6931, anything more than 1 of the scheduled 8 meetings is determined to be “excessive”. If expect to miss 2 or more class periods, please do not enroll for this course this semester. Finally, please contact me prior to the beginning of the class which you will be absent.

The course outline also indicates the dates and times of our class meetings; this information is also on CheckMarq.

REQUIRED TEXT: NONE

A text that you may wish to invest in: “Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills (3rd Edition, 2012).” It was originally published in 1994 (University of Michigan Press). The authors also did a follow up to the original 1994 edition which is entitled: English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide. The more recent text is aimed toward PhD dissertations and writing/presenting for an academic conference, but also has good sections on literature reviews and other sections of a research-oriented project.

Some sections of the 2012 edition will be scanned and posted in the course’s D2L site. A few copies of the 2012 text will also be available from the Economics Department. The 1994 edition is available at the library.
Electronic Information: This course uses the D2L resource to disseminate information during the semester. Marquette’s D2L entry page is http://d2l.mu.edu. It is suggested that you save any files that are posted to a storage drive (flash drive, etc.) and then print. I will use Marquette EMarq accounts for email correspondence as part of this class; you can have mail forwarded to another if you would like.

COURSE MOTIVATION, DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

A requirement that all students must complete for the degree of Master of Science in Applied Economics (MSAE) at Marquette is a professional project. This project includes both a writing and presentation component. While students have had practice completing research-oriented term papers for a variety of courses throughout their undergraduate and graduate careers, most have not been required to carry out a project of the scope and or magnitude of that expected for successful completion of the professional project for the MSAE degree. In addition, while the project is a requirement for the degree, its completion is not part of any formal course. These two factors, taken together, have provided some unsatisfactory outcomes regarding the professional projects in recent years.

From the point of view of students, the lack of a formal course setting can be frustrating, as the lack of structure (a) can leave the student unsure on how to proceed, especially at the beginning of the project and again just prior to the presentation, and (b) provides no template to follow in order to develop and build the writing component (which can be exacerbated by the fact different faculty members, in their role of project committee chair, have slightly different ways of guiding students through the process). Coupled with the fact students have not been required to carry out a project like this prior to trying to do so for this requirement (or even simply completing the outline to get approval for the project!), these factors tend to lead to uncertainty by students at the beginning of the project. This delays the process and often results in an outcome that is rushed (in order to meet graduation deadlines) and that does not live up to the student’s potential.

Faculty members often are first contacted by the student exactly when he/she is uncertain about how to proceed. Many of the first meetings are spent talking about the background of topic and/or setting a specific research question (both good uses of the time), but also discussions about a timeline and how to proceed in putting together the project (not such great uses of time). One particular aspect that suffers is getting students to focus on a specific topic (Why are you interested in this topic? What is the big picture regarding this issue? Which side of the argument are you going to take?) A good portion of the first meeting (or meetings) is (are) spent talking about the structure of the project rather than analyzing data, refining the research question, moving from reading and summarizing previous research to using it to specify and describe a model used to help answer the research question, and so on. Unfortunately, given the timeline necessary for students to complete the process for graduation, by the time the structure and writing issues are resolved, the time remaining for faculty member to offer guidance on the analysis, putting the finishing touches on the project, and discussing the presentation becomes very limited. As mentioned above, this adds to the rushed nature of the project and an outcome that leaves those involved less than satisfied.

Therefore, the Economics Department has decided to put this course together to help improve the outcome of what we feel is a very important aspect of the MSAE degree, the professional project. There are at least two main objectives. First, provide guidance regarding the structure of as well as strategies that can be used for the writing component of the professional project. An additional part of this objective is to provide guidance on the presentation component of the project. One other item covered in
The course that is not a specific part of the project but something you should be introduced to and given some practice on: an executive summary.

The second objective is to provide more information about the process of completing the professional project (some of which is found in the MSAE Handbook all students should have received when beginning the program). With regard to this objective, as various times in the course we will talk about (and even complete assignments on):

- what you need to do to formally begin the project (forms, timeline)
- issues related to topic choice (not just what topic, but when to start this process, who to talk to about your topic, etc.)
  - thinking about the big picture
  - examining why you are interested in the topic
  - if relevant, considering the different sides of the issue to argue,
  - what to include in the outline necessary to get approval for your project
- issues related to the presentation phase of the project
  - length and coverage of presentation
  - the Q&A component
  - who is involved
- wrapping up your project post-presentation.

These objectives are intended to reduce some of the uncertainty students have at the beginning and end of the project. If successful, students should be able to approach the project with more confidence and spend less time in the initial meeting(s) with the faculty member who is directing the project on structure and timeline issues and more time on developing a specific research question and putting together the project. If this occurs, the likelihood of improving the outcome of the projects will increase, something that both students and faculty members will enjoy.

In order to meet those objectives, the plan for the course is to provide strategies that can be used in the course of developing and completing the various components of the professional project (and an executive summary type document). Each module introduces one important component of the project (for example, literature review). Students will complete in-class and outside-of-class assignments in order to practice developing the particular component. Unfortunately, most, if not all of the students in the course are not to the point in the program where they are beginning the professional project. This means some of the practice assignments must be completed using another’s work. Therefore, most of the in-class assignments will involve reviewing and critiquing recent articles or past MSAE projects. On the other hand, the outside-of-class assignments will be based on re-writing passages from one of your MSAE term papers; the assignment regarding the presentation component will also be based on one of your MSAE term papers. Some of the assignments will have students creating an outline or list to aid in the completion of a specific component; other assignments are more of a “rewrite” from your term paper. A goal of the course is to introduce you to strategies to help build these various components of a professional project, and give you some practice at putting the strategies into action.

Finally, one aspect that this course will not specifically cover but, by definition, will be part of the grading of the assignment; what I call writing mechanics. You will be expected to proofread any assignments you submit for spelling and grammatical errors. Most assignments will be checked for spelling and grammatical accuracy; some minor reduction in grade will be associated with spelling or grammatical errors.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

In-Class Group Work / Discussion

For the five topics/modules we cover, there will be group work and/or a discussion with student participation. The group work will have a specific deliverable prior to the end of the session. The sessions in which there is no deliverable will be evaluated for the quality, and to a lesser extent quantity, of student participation. The component will be weighted 15% (3% for each of the five modules) of your overall course grade.

Outside-of-Class Assignments

The remainder of the course grade (85%) will consist of outside-of-class assignments related the each of the five modules. The first five are entirely written assignments, the final is related to the presentation component of the professional project and will have both an outside-of-class piece as well as a short presentation done during one of the last two class meeting periods. Some of these assignments will be a combination of an outline or table plus some writing exercise, others will be only the writing piece. These assignments will sum to 85% but will have different weights (i.e., not all are 14.167% of the final course grade). Please see the course outline for weights and due dates.

CLASS MATERIALS

Please check D2L (Content area) for materials that will be used for this course. They will include readings, articles and other documents that will be discussed during class and/or used as templates for some of the assignments. In addition, I will post other materials related to the process of beginning, carrying out and completing the MSAE professional project.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

Saturday, January 23  Class time is 1:00 pm – 2:20 pm

1) INTRODUCTION
   Review course syllabus, introductions and expectations, a brief overview of the professional project

2) LITERATURE REVIEW SECTION
   During the first class session, the discussion will be the basics of the literature review section. This is often the first section students will begin to write as part of the professional project.

   Rebecca Nowacek, the Director of the Ott Memorial Writing Center at Marquette will lead the discussion. This discussion will include some examples including group project using passages from a literature review from a relatively recent MSAE project.

   Assignments:  a) Prior to the class, please read the summary of the professional project on interest sensitivity of the demand for financial assets. That document will be used as part of the in-class assignment during the January 23 class meeting.
1) Using a term paper that you have already submitted for one of your MSAE courses (for most, this will be your ECON 6560 term paper), please complete the following:

- **State the problem or issue that you analyzed in non-technical language.** You might want to think of these questions when you complete this part: What is the problem you have analyzed? What question are you answering with your paper? Why is this an interesting question? This paragraph should be an overview or the big picture of your study, that is do not make it overly detailed.

- **Describe the status of the problem as one would find in the scholarly literature.** What is the currently accepted theory or explanation? Are there competing explanations? If yes, describe them. You should include informal references in your description (see the way the person did the references in the interest sensitivity of financial assets document you need to read for the first class), then provide a list of those references at the end of the assignment. You should only have maximum 4-5 references, but minimum is 2.

- **Describe the data and methods you used to analyze the problem.** Do not describe the results, but rather describe the data (variables) in your study (including source(s)) and a sentence or two on methods (for most this will be “regression analysis”, maybe some of you can get more detailed than simply OLS).

I would estimate this assignment to be about 2-3 pages (double-spaced, 11 or 12 font). The first and third items should be one paragraph, the second may be 2-3 paragraphs.

This assignment (listed as 1, above) is worth 11% of your final course grade; it is due by January 30, noon.

**Saturday, January 30 Class time is 1:00 pm – 2:20 pm**

LITERATURE REVIEW SECTION, continued

In the second meeting, the discussion will feature additional examples from recent articles and/or MSAE projects. These examples will be specific to Economics and Business, and will try to provide you different templates regarding ways to develop a literature review section depending on the type of research article you are crafting.

Assignment 2: Re-order the articles/materials from the previous MSAE term paper you used in assignment 1; provide an annotated list that includes:

- One to three sentences describing the information from the reference (why is it related to your topic, what insight does it bring to bear on your topic). See the examples covered in week 1, especially Excerpts 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8.
- A sentence explaining why you place it in your list in the position you have assigned it

Finally, use any three consecutive references from your list and develop a “literature review” that is no more than three paragraphs in length. Be sure to incorporate some of the methods covered in session one relating to the CARS document covered by Rebecca Nowacek from the Writing Center.

This assignment will be worth 13.7% of your final course grade; it is due by February 6, noon.
Saturday, February 13  Class time is 1:00 pm – 2:20 pm

3) MODEL SPECIFICATION SECTION
Once the literature review section is complete, the next section or component of the professional project is where students spell out the model to be used for the analysis.

The class discussion will take a look at how some professional projects do an inadequate job of connecting the general notion of the issue brought out in the literature review section to the specific empirical model used for the analysis. We will then look at a few ways that this is done by others, showing how they derive a testable hypothesis, related to but expanding upon the references provided in the literature section, that uses an accepted framework and/or economic methodology.

Assignment 3

Using the MSAE term paper used in previous assignments, re-write the model section. Since the previous homework includes a list of references for this paper, somewhere in your model section you will need to refer to at least one of those references (probably more than one). While it is hard to put a quantity of pages on this assignment, my guess is that it should be at least 2 pages (double spaced) and probably not more than 4-5 pages.

This assignment will be worth 16.4% of your final course grade; it is due by February 20, noon.

Saturday, February 27  Class time is 9:30 am – 11:30 am

4) EMPIRICAL SECTION
The component of the project that follows the specification of the model includes describing the data, linking the data to framework/methods, describing pre-estimation issues, describing the results in both a technical and non-technical fashion, and discussing how the results relate to the articles from the literature review.

Class discussion / group work will center on going over the data and results of a recent study, strategizing how to describe the data and results and delivering some type of outline or table doing so.

Assignment 4

This will be in two parts. The first is to read over parts of a recent article, critique how the data and results sections are presented including offering your suggestion to improve the presentation of the data discussion and/or results. The second part of the assignment is to use the MSAE term paper you have used in previous assignments, re-write the results section. Since a previous homework includes a list of references for this paper, somewhere in your model section you will need to refer to at least one of those references as part of a discussion suggesting how your result relate to those in one of the articles you cited. An estimate of the length of the first part is approximately 2 pages (plus any table you use to show the data/results more clearly), while as with the previous assignment, it is hard to put a quantity of pages on this assignment, my guess is that it should be at least 2 pages (double spaced) and probably not more than 3-4 pages.

This assignment will be worth 13.8% of your final course grade; it is due by March 5, noon.
Saturday, March 12  Class time is 9:30 am – 11:30 am

5) INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION SECTIONS (including Executive Summary)
It is typical that the final components of the project that are completed are the introduction and conclusion. Strategies for developing effective introductions and conclusions will be covered (both content and a few style issues). In addition, while not a required part of the professional project, this is a good place for students to be able to craft an executive summary type document.

The in-class discussion and potential deliverable is to look at recent articles and/or MSAE projects and develop an outline on items that should be part of any introduction and conclusion.

Assignment 5

Once again students will be asked to use the MSAE term paper from previous assignments to re-write the introduction and conclusion sections. It is typical for each section to be no more than 2 pages in length. Finally, each student will be asked to write an executive summary of this previous MSAE term paper. Executive Summary documents are 1 page in length.

This assignment will be worth 13.7% of your final course grade; it is due by March 17, noon.

Saturday, April 2  Class time is 1:00 pm – 2:50 pm

6) PRESENTATION ISSUES
The final component of the project is the presentation. After considerable time and effort crafting the written component, students are asked to develop a presentation and discuss their research – in about 20 minutes. We will discuss strategies regarding what do you talk about from the written component and what do you omit? We will also briefly talk about the question and answer (Q&A) part of the presentation.

The in-class discussion and group deliverable will focus on developing a list of 5-10 “must discuss” topics that need to be part of the presentation.

Assignment 6

One again students will be asked to use the MSAE term paper from previous assignments. The first part of the assignment is to develop your list of 5-10 “must discuss” topics, then use that list to create no more than 10 slides you might use in the course of making the presentation (one for each of your “must discuss” topics). Each student will then give a 10-12 minute presentation using those slides (and their previous term paper as a basis) AND take 1 question from the audience based on the presentation. (The audience questions will be part of the in-class discussion/participation for this topic.)

This assignment will be worth 16.4% of your final course grade; the list and slides are due by Friday, April 8  4:00 pm
Saturday, April 9 and April 16   Class time is 1:00 pm – 2:50 pm

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS and Q&A (assignment days/times TBA)

Homework due dates:                Jan 30, Feb 6, Feb 20, Mar 5, Mar 17, Apr 8
Presentation dates:             Apr 9 / Apr 16

The rules for using the dropbox to submit assignments: (1) you must **correctly submit** the file prior to the time the assignment is due (2) you must submit the assignment using Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx) or Adobe format (.pdf); (3) it is **YOUR** responsibility to make sure that when the file is printed, the assignment comes out looking acceptable (double-spaced, tables all on one page, etc.

**The weighting scheme for grades will be as follows:**

**Group Work and/or in-class discussion participation:**

5 @ 3 points each . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 15

**Homework:**

1 @ 11 points; 2 @ 13.7 points each, 1 @ 13.8 points and 2 @ 16.4 points each . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 85

The number of points sum to 100. The grade "cut-off" of points earned (i.e., the lowest number of points to get the corresponding grade) for this course are **A: 92, AB: 87, B: 80, BC: 75, C: 70 - - anything below 70 is an F.**

In part to comply with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Marquette University requires faculty members to submit final grades via CheckMarq by midday the Tuesday after finals week. Students are able to view their final grades in CheckMarq at the end of the business day on the Tuesday after finals week.