

Law and Economics Colloquium – Law 208

Tuesdays @ 12 pm – 1:15 pm

Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University, Fall 2026

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Office Hours. Wednesdays 11 am – 1 pm & by appointment.

Welcome. This course brings together outside scholars, resident faculty, and law school students for discussion of cutting-edge research papers in the law & economics tradition. Seven sessions will feature guest speakers presenting original research. The remaining weeks introduce key concepts in law and economics, including empirical methods, and an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding through guided discussions and reflections.

Learning Outcomes: This course will introduce students to advanced research in law & economics. Students will develop skills in reading, interpreting, and critiquing legal scholarship through written assignments and participation in seminar discussions. Students will also be able to produce and articulate critical questions that will challenge and improve the speakers' research.

Workshops are also open to all interested GMU Faculty (including non-law faculty). Class will be held only on the dates listed below under the Class Schedule.

Course Requirements and Grading

Required Readings: In addition to the seminar papers, we will read selections from the following texts.

- ADAM CHILTON & KYLE ROZEMA, TRIAL BY NUMBERS (2024).
- ROBERT COOTER & THOMAS ULEN, [LAW AND ECONOMICS](#), 6th Edition (2016).

Attendance & Participation

- Students are expected to be on time. If you anticipate missing a class, please provide notice in advance via email. *Persons absent for more than two classes will not receive a passing grade.*
- **Attention and Device Policy.** Participation requires focus and intentionality.
 - **Speaker sessions.** Laptops and tablets closed; phones silenced and put away. Take notes by hand and bring a printed copy of your writeup so your prepared questions are in front of you.
 - **In-class meetings.** Laptops are permitted for notetaking.
 - **All sessions.** AI tools may not be used during class.

- **Accommodations.** Students with accommodations through Disability Services should speak with me. Arrangements will be made without any explanation to the class.
- **Enforcement.** Device use inconsistent with this policy will be reflected in the attendance, participation, and engagement component of the grade.
- Be prepared to ask one question each session (subject to time constraints), or I may resort to cold calling.
- **Attendance, participation, and engagement determine 20% of the final grade.**

Weekly Assignments

- For each seminar paper, submit a writeup of roughly 700 to 1,000 words containing a critical assessment of the paper and three substantive questions. **The weekly assignments determine 45% of the final grade.**
- **The assessment.** Your task is to respond to the paper, not to summarize it. You may summarize a portion where doing so is necessary to set up an assessment, but a writeup that is mostly a summary will not receive full credit. Productive angles include:
 - the scholarly contribution, that is, what is genuinely new here, and how much does it matter;
 - the methodology including its strengths and weaknesses, and how you would potentially fix the weaknesses;
 - the assumptions of the theoretical or empirical model, particularly strong ones, and any evidence that they are improper;
 - the structure of the argument, including how it might be better organized;
 - the implications of the work, including ones the author has not drawn.
- A writeup that develops two or three of the above carefully is far stronger than one that touches all five in passing.
- **The questions.** List three questions, numbered, at the end of the writeup. They should be questions the author would have to think about and not requests for clarification and not questions the paper already answers. You may also develop them in the body of the assessment but please list them separately so I can find them.
- **Tone.** You are reading unpublished work by a scholar who will be in the room. Write the kind of criticism you would want to receive: specific, generous about what the paper is trying to do, and fair on the merits.
- **Logistics.** Due Mondays at 12 pm, 24 hours before the workshop. Submit as a Word file via TWEN; 1.5-line spacing, fully justified, 12-point font, one-inch margins.

Final Critique

- Write one in-depth critique of a single seminar paper presented during the semester. Roughly 1,500 to 2,000 words. **Due Friday, Nov. 20 at 5 pm**; submit as a Word file via TWEN, same formatting as the weekly assignments. **The final critique determines 35% of the final grade.**
- **What it is.** The center of the critique should be the methodology and logic of the paper, not its policy conclusion. Productive responses include:
 - a critique of specific claims or of the argument as a whole;
 - a challenge to the methodology, or to an assumption the results depend on;
 - a fundamental question the paper leaves unanswered that it arguably should have addressed;
 - implications the author has not drawn out;
 - a suggested improvement or extension that follows naturally from the paper.
- **Relation to your weekly writeup.** You may build on the weekly assignment you wrote for that paper, and you are encouraged to do so—but the critique must go substantially further. Expect to develop one or two of your original points in real depth (or introduce a new point you discover upon a second reading) and engage the paper more closely than what a weekly writeup allows. A lightly expanded weekly assignment is not a critique.
- **What distinguishes a strong critique.** The strongest critiques identify and address the core elements of the paper rather than focusing on more minor objections. The goal is to leave the author with something worth considering further.
- **Citations.** There is no need to cite extensively. Where you do cite, use Bluebook formatting.

Artificial Intelligence Policy: This seminar takes a practical approach to AI: some uses are permitted, some require disclosure, and some are prohibited.

Permitted, no disclosure. You may use AI tools to brainstorm, to locate and identify sources, and to explain a concept or method you encountered in a paper (e.g., “what is a synthetic control design?”). These are legitimate uses of technology that lawyers employ in practice, and you are encouraged to develop judgment about when and how AI assistance adds value. If the substance or the phrasing came from the AI model rather than from you, however, it is not covered here.

Permitted, with disclosure. You may use AI to revise your own completed draft for clarity, flow, or organization. If you do, include a brief note at the end of the document identifying the tool and describing what you asked it to do, e.g., “The author used [tool] to tighten phrasing and reorganize Part II. The

analysis and arguments are the author's own." One note per document is sufficient; footnotes at each instance are not required.

Prohibited. You may not input the speaker's paper, or any substantial portion of it, into any AI system. This includes uploading a PDF, pasting text, browser extensions and "chat with this document" features, and note-taking or reader applications with AI functionality built in. These are unpublished working papers, circulated to us in confidence and often under review elsewhere. Putting them into a third-party system is a breach of that confidence and a poor habit to carry into practice. If you are unsure whether a tool you use qualifies, ask me before using it. You also may not submit work substantively generated by AI. Your analysis, arguments, and written voice must be your own.

Why this policy. Blanket bans are difficult to enforce and ignore the reality of evolving legal practices. But the weekly assignments and final critique exist to reflect your thinking, not a machine's. You may be asked to defend your questions aloud, in front of the person who wrote the paper.

Honor Code: Students are expected to adhere to the Scalia Law [HONOR CODE](#).

Class Schedule

- 8/18 In-Class Meeting: Foundations of Law & Economics
- *Reading: (Optional) Cooter & Ulen, Chs. 1, 2 (37-43)*
- 8/25 In-Class Meeting: Primer on Empirical Methods
- *Reading: Chilton & Rozema, Chs. 1, 3*
- 9/1 **Jens Frankenreiter (WashU Law)**
- 9/8 **Omer Pelled (U. of Chicago Law)**
- 9/15 In-Class Meeting: Student Reflections & Primer on Regressions
- *Reading: Chilton & Rozema, Ch. 5*
- 9/22 **Bridget Dooling (OSU Law)**
- 9/29 **Brad Greenwood (GMU Bus.)**
- 10/6 In-Class Meeting: Student Reflections & Difference-in-Differences
- *Reading: Chilton & Rozema, Ch. 6*
- 10/13 **Kwon-Yong Jin (NYU Law)**
- 10/20 **David Abrams (Penn Law)**
- 10/27 (no class)
- 11/3 (Election Day - no class)
- 11/10 **Weijia Rao (Boston U. Law)**
- 11/17 In-Class Meeting: Student Reflections