Introduction:
Economics can elicit a strong emotional response from students due to apprehension and anxiety. These feelings can influence student performance and perceptions of the discipline. The purpose of the research is to gain insight into student attitudes towards economics as well as develop a measure of economics anxiety, previously studied primarily in mathematics and statistics.

Review of Literature:
- Students with higher pre-course attitudes towards economics receive significantly higher grades in their introductory economics courses (Karstensson and Vedder, 1974).
- Students with increased math ability report lower levels of apprehension towards their economics course, while females report higher levels (Bendict & Hoag, 2002).
- Exposure to economics in high school has little to no impact on student attitudes and performance in college level introductory economics courses (Brock, 2011).

Procedure:
Students in ECON 201 Principles of Microeconomics answered a background survey and completed the following instruments:
- Attitudes towards Economics (ATE) (Van Wyk, 2012)
- Survey of Economics Attitudes (SEA) (Soper & Walstad, 1983)
- Economics Anxiety Rating Scale (EARS) (Hopko et al., 2003)
- Test of Understanding College Economics (TUCE) (Walstad et al., 2007)
- Male
- Math
- Capable
- TUCE
- Previous ECON

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<td>Pairwise Correlation Coefficients</td>
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* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001; n=88

Student Responses:
Selected student responses to “How do you feel about taking this course?”:

- “I am a little nervous because I have never really taken an actual economics course, and I have never really been super interested in it.”
- “I’m nervous to see how I will do. I am by no means a math person so I fear I will have a low grade.”
- “I feel prepared since I took economics in high school and last semester.”

Specific questions of interest:
- “Were you apprehensive about taking this course?”
- “I have a strong mathematical background.”
- “I am capable of understanding this subject.”

Responses to the first question were either yes or no while the remaining two were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale.

Preliminary Results:
31.82% of the students reported being apprehensive about taking the Principles of Microeconomics course.

As hypothesized all variables included in the analysis have the expected negative sign, indicating that students with higher levels for each variable have lower scores for apprehension and anxiety (Table 1).

Students that report feelings of apprehension and anxiety towards the economics course report significantly lower scores for:
- Attitudes toward economics measured by both the ATE and SEA
- Self-reported math ability
- Feelings of being capable of understanding economics.

Although preliminary, the study can be used to inform instructors of the relationship between apprehension and student background characteristics. By better understanding student attitudes, informed improvements to the presentation of material and availability of supplemental resources can be implemented.

Next Steps:
Final data collection will take place at the end of the SP14 semester. At that time, post-test measures of attitudes, performance in the course, and more detailed background characteristics will be gathered.

Further econometric analysis:
- Detailed item analysis of EARS
- Enhanced probit estimation
- Impact of initial attitudes on student performance

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