

ECON 548: Topics in Economics of Information
Bilkent University
Spring 2026 - Part I
Last updated: January 20, 2026

Instructor: A. Arda Gitmez (A-111, arda.gitmez@bilkent.edu.tr)
Lectures: Mon 15.30-17.20, Thu 11.30-12.20 (A-227)
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Objectives

This course aims to bring the graduate students to the research frontier in economic theory. The course will be situated between an advanced level topics class and a reading group.

In the first half of the class, we will focus on models of *narratives*.

Grading

Presentations: In the first half of the class, you will each make two presentations. The presentation will be about a paper that you choose from the reading list (provided below). A presentation should take 25-30 minutes: basically, read the paper, distill it, and then discuss with us what you think about it. You do not need to cover every detail in the paper or go through every step in the proof; indeed, it is better if you walk us through some toy example. What we need is some core idea on the contribution of the paper to kickstart the discussion, and a sense of what the paper's contribution is. We will schedule the presentations early in the semester so that you will have time to prepare.

Homework: I will also give one assignment, which will take the form of writing a referee report for a recent working paper. You will be assigned different working papers. Writing referee reports is an important academic skill and hopefully this will be an excuse for you to flex some muscles.

Your overall grade of the first half will be determined by:

Participation:	10%
Presentations:	25%
Assignment:	15%

Outline

(The reading list will be updated as we proceed with the semester.)

Overview and Early Examples

Shiller (2019), *Narrative Economics: How Stories Go Viral and Drive Major Economic Events*, Princeton University Press.

Shiller (2017, AER), "Narrative Economics".

Benabou, Falk, and Tirole (2020, Working Paper), "Narratives, Imperatives, and Moral Persuasion".

Akerlof and Rayo (2020, Working Paper), "Narratives and the Economics of the Family".

Basics - Information and Persuasion

Bengt Holmström's lecture notes from 14.124. <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/economics/14-124-microeconomic-theory-iv-spring-2017/index.htm>

Kamenica and Gentzkow (2011, AER), "Bayesian Persuasion".

Eliasz, Spiegel, and Thysen (2021, JET), "Strategic Interpretations".

Eliasz and Rubinstein (2025, Working Paper), "Wasonian Persuasion".

Basics - Behavioral Foundations

Ortoleva (2012, AER), "Modeling the Change of Paradigm: Non-Bayesian Reactions to Unexpected News".

Montiel Olea, Ortoleva, Pai, and Prat (2022, QJE), "Competing Models".

Dolecek, Dubus, Sahuguet, and Waelbroeck (2024, Working Paper), "The Signaling Value of Simplicity".

Akerlof, Holden, and Li (2025, Working Paper), "Getting the Picture".

Narratives as DAGs

Eliasz and Spiegel (2020, AER), "A Model of Competing Narratives".

Eliasz, Galperti, and Spiegel (2025, JEEA), "False Narratives and Political Mobilization".

Eliasz and Spiegel (2025, Working Paper), "News Media as Suppliers of Narratives (and Information)".

Horz and Kocak (2025, QJPS), " 'I Alone Can Fix It:' the Strongman Narrative and Leader Support"

Narratives as Models/Stories

Schwartzstein and Sunderam (2021, AER), "Using Models to Persuade".

Levy, Razin, and Young (2022, AER), "Misspecified Politics and the Recurrence of Populism".

Izzo, Martin, and Callander (2023, AJPS), "Ideological Competition".

Hafer, Izzo, and Landa (2025, AJPS), "Argumentation Strategies in Party Competition".

Montiel Olea and Prat (2025, Working Paper), "Competing Ideologies: Fit, Simplicity, and Fear".

Aina (2025, Working Paper), "Tailored Stories".

Schwartzstein and Sunderam (2025, Working Paper), "Sharing Models to Interpret Data".

Besley and Brzezinski (2025, Working Paper), "The Political Economy of Neoliberal Narratives".

Experimental Studies

Graeber, Roth, and Zimmermann (2024, QJE), "Stories, Statistics, and Memory".

Ambuehl and Thysen (2024, Working Paper), “Choosing Between Causal Interpretations: An Experimental Study”

Graeber, Roth, and Schesch (2024, Working Paper), “Explanations”.

Charles and Kendall (2025, Working Paper), “Causal Narratives”.

Barron and Fries (2025, Working Paper), “Narrative Persuasion”.

Narratives in Macroeconomics

Flynn and Sastry (2022, Working Paper), “The Macroeconomics of Narratives”.

Andre, Haaland, Roth, Wiederholt, and Wohlfart (2025, Working Paper), “Narratives about the Macroeconomy”.