

Econ 496
Fall 2023 Quarter
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Course Description and Goals: This course provides a forum for undergraduate honors students to begin to pursue independent thesis research. The course consists of a limited number of class meetings aimed at helping students understand the research process and develop necessary techniques. There will also be a series of one-on-one meetings with the course instructor with the goal of providing individualized guidance through the research process. To this end, there will be a series of deadlines throughout the quarter to ensure that steady progress is being made. Students will receive critical/constructive feedback on their ideas and work, both from the instructor and from fellow students. By the end of the course, students will complete a 12-15 page research proposal, which they will continue to develop in Econ 497 during the Winter quarter with an individual advisor.

Class Meetings: The course is scheduled for **3:30 – 5:20 on Tuesdays in Smith 307**. This class will be taught **in person**. We will only meet on dates indicated on the schedule below.

Schedule Flexibility: Due to family obligations, **I will be rescheduling some classes** during the latter half of the quarter. Note that classes only have dates until Oct 31. After this, I will communicate when we are meeting and which lecture notes are relevant ahead of time. If necessary, we may schedule a make-up session or two.

Prerequisites: This course is restricted to economics majors who have been admitted to the Economics Honors Program. You should have taken Econ 396 in the preceding Spring quarter. Additionally, training in econometrics or any other quantitative courses will be extremely useful in carrying out your thesis research.

Textbook: There is no textbook for this course. Don't buy one.

Grading: The final grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Homework Assignments 25%
2. Class Participation (including feedback during others' presentations) 10%
3. Peer Feedback Assignment 5%
4. Presentations 20%
5. Final Proposal 40%

As this is a course designed for self-selected, motivated, high-achieving students, the target grade range is different than in typical 400-level economics courses. I will provide details on the first day of class.

Homework: There will be three homework assignments, in addition to a peer review assignment where you will review other students' submissions of HW#3. These homework assignments will feed into your presentations and provide deadlines to ensure that you are making progress as the quarter progresses.

Presentations: You will give two presentations during the quarter. The first will be a shorter in-progress presentation in which you present your research question. The second will include all aspects of the final proposal. While these are graded, the primary purpose is to receive constructive feedback and to engage other smart people (your classmates!) to help your research along.

Class Participation: Class participation is mandatory. Classes will consist of a series of discussions followed by, later in the quarter, class presentations by students. Engagement with the ideas and concepts, including providing constructive/critical feedback, is essential to this process.

Laptops/Tablets in Class: I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class. I have found that they make class discussion more difficult. This class is necessarily interactive, and I find that having a screen in front of you tends to detract from active participation.

Office Hours: Office hours specifically for this course are noted in the schedule below. These will be held in Savery 327. I also have scheduled office hours on **Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:00pm**. These are preferably done in person but I will try to accommodate requests to meet virtually via Zoom.

Contact: The easiest way to contact me is via email. Please put “496” in the title to the email so that I will know that it is not spam. It is okay to ask simple questions over email, but if you have more complicated questions, including clarifications about concepts or about paper topics, then it is usually better to come to office hours.

Week (Tuesday)	Topic / Assignment	Notes
Oct 3	Class Introduction Developing a Topic	In-class meeting.
Oct 10	HW1 due Oct 9	Mandatory office hours #1. Tues and Wed 3:00 – 5:00
Oct 17	Finding data, developing a question	In-class meeting.
Oct 24	HW2 due Oct 23	Mandatory office hours #2. Tues and Wed 3:00 – 5:00
Oct 31	In-progress presentations	In-class meeting.
	In-progress presentations	In-class meeting.
	Literature Reviews Finding an Adviser Peer Feedback	In-class meeting.
	HW3 due Nov 20	Mandatory office hours #3. Tues 2:30 – 5:00
	Group 1: Final presentations Group 2: Peer feedback due	In-class meeting.
	Group 1: Peer feedback due Group 2: Final Presentations	In-class meeting.
	Final proposals due Dec 15	Optional office hours by appointment