Economics 496; Fall 2016

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Course Objective

This course will provide a forum for undergraduate honors students to pursue independent thesis research. One-on-one meetings tailored to individual students' interests will aim to help students understand the research process better as well as develop the necessary techniques for writing good economics papers in a variety of subfields within economics. There will be several deadlines throughout the quarter to ensure that good progress is being made, and 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 put together a 12 to 15 page substantive research proposal, which they will continue to develop in Econ 497 with an individual advisor.

Components of the proposal (more detail in a separate that will be posted on Canvas later)

- State the thesis question
- Review the literature
- Link the thesis approach with the literature
- Outline the relevant theory (the models)
- Describe the (potential) data and any preliminary empirical work that you have already done

Thesis Content

Acceptable theses are those which are original, involve "creating" knowledge using primary sources, and aim to make a worthwhile contribution to a relevant economic question. Sometimes this contribution comes from an interesting empirical or theoretical result, but other times contributions can arise from showing how an apparently promising avenue of research may not prove fruitful. The thesis does not have to involve data or regressions; it can be a purely theoretical exposition, and sometimes it can be entirely literary with no data or equations. However, remember that one of the most crucial elements in research is to demonstrate why your conclusion is sound, and one fruitful way to do this is with empirical or theoretical support for your arguments.

Course Format

The class meetings are from 3:30 to 5:20pm on Tuesdays, although the majority of the "class time" will be one-on-one meetings. Sign-ups for required office hours will be conducted online via a doodle poll. For optional office hours, there is no need to sign-up; you can just drop in.

Schedule

Note that we will not meet in person unless it explicitly says so on the schedule below. There will also not be an in-person final exam; your final proposal can be turned in online on the day of the exam.

The schedule is subject to change as I get a sense of the class's interests and progress. Any changes will be announced through email, so make sure to check your official UW email regularly.

Week	Topic	Assignments (all to be **turned in on Canvas**. Look under "Assignments")
1	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Tuesday, October 4)** Introduction to the course and the thesis writing process. We'll also discuss the process of finding a topic.	HW1 due by 11:59 pm on October 10.
2	Required Office Hours #1 on Tuesday, October 11 and Wednesday, October 12	
3	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Tuesday, October 18).** Finding relevant literature and data. Optional Office Hours after class (until 6:00 pm).	HW2 due by 11:59 pm on October 24.
4	Required Office Hours #2 on Tuesday, October 25 and Wednesday, October 26	
5	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Tuesday, November 1).** In-Progress Presentations. Optional Office Hours after class (until 6:00 pm).	
6	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Tuesday, November 8).** In-Progress Presentations, continued. Optional Office Hours after class (until 6:00 pm).	
7	Required Office Hours #3 on Tuesday, November 15 and Wednesday, November 16.	Literature review/preliminary proposal due by 11:59 pm on November 21.
8	Optional Office Hours on Tuesday November 22, 3:30 – 6:00 pm.	
9	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Tuesday, November 29.)** Final presentations. Optional Office Hours after class and TBA.	
10	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Tuesday, December 6.)** Final presentations. Optional Office Hours after class and TBA.	Final proposal due by 11:59 pm on December 15.

Grading rubric:

Homework	15%
Literature review	15%
Final Presentation	20%
Final Proposal	50%

Grading guidelines:

Both ECON 496 and ECON 497 will follow the grading guidelines below:

3.9 - 4.0 Truly exceptional work in terms of originality, sophistication of modeling or empirical analyses. Work deserving the highest honors.

3.6-3.8   Solid work with careful execution and persuasive arguments that are well presented. Work deserving high honors.

3.1-3.5   Successful and generally satisfactory completion of the honors thesis requirement.

While completed thesis proposals and final theses rarely receive grades of 3.0 or below, this can happen if the quality of the work is deemed unsatisfactory and unbefitting of honors level economic work. Departmental honors will not be given in such cases.