Economics 496

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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 Wednesdays, 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 google calendar sign-up.

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.

The schedule is subject to change as I get a sense of the class's interests, progress, and times that work best for everyone. Any changes will be announced through email (as well as updated on the class calendar), so make sure to check your these regularly.

You can follow the class schedule with the following google calendar link:

http://tinyurl.com/norw97n

Week	Topic	Assignments (all to be **turned in on Canvas**. Look under "Assignments")
1	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Wednesday, September 30)** Introduction to the course and the thesis writing process. We'll also discuss finding a topic and go over some potential data sources.	HW1 due by 5 pm on October 6.
2	Required Office Hours on Wednesday October 7	
3	Optional Office Hours on Monday October 12 and Thursday, October 15	
4	Work on reading the literature for your second homework (and other things we've discussed in office hours so far).	
5	Required Office Hours 2 on Wednesday October 28	HW2 due by 5 pm on October 27.
6	Optional Office Hours on Tuesday November 3	
7	No class; Veteran's Day. Optional Office hours on Tuesday, November 10 and Thursday, November 12	Literature review/preliminary proposal due by 5 pm on November 13.
8	Required Office Hours 3 on Monday, November 16 [alternative times possible for those with Monday afternoon conflicts]	
9	Optional Office Hours on Tuesday November 24	
10	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Wednesday, December 2)** Final presentations. Optional office hours TBD.	
11	**In person meeting! (scheduled class time Wednesday, December 9)** Final presentations. Optional office hours TBD.	Final proposal due by 5 pm on December 18.

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.