

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

Department of Economics

**ECON4309–801:  
ECONOMICS HONORS SEMINAR 1**

Fall 2008

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### Web Pages

The course web page will be the main vehicle for disseminating information:

<http://www.colorado.edu/Economics/courses/boileau/4309/econ4309.html>

The Honors Program has a web page that contains important information:

<http://www.colorado.edu/Honors/index.html>

### Objective

The main objective of this course (and of the companion course *ECON 4339–801 Economic Honors Seminar 2*) is to help you write a successful undergraduate honors thesis in economics. A successful undergraduate thesis embodies the results of well executed, original, and significant research in economics. The thesis must show a proficient use of the tools of economics. It must contain independent and creative work (which precludes plagiarizing previous research). The thesis must be important. The judges of the execution, originality, and importance of the thesis will be your advisor and the other members of the defense committee.

The thesis must be defended by Wednesday 8 April 2009 to graduate in Spring 2009. Until then, you will have to accomplish a number of tasks. These include:

1. Identify a research topic.
2. Find a willing faculty advisor.
3. Identify an interesting and answerable research question.
4. Write a review of the literature relevant to your research question.
5. Write a research proposal that describes your question, the methodology required to answer the question, and the required data.
6. Collect and organize the required data.

7. Perform the necessary analysis to answer your question.
8. Write and present a working paper version of your thesis.
9. Write the final version of the thesis.
10. Defend your thesis.

Adequate progress toward the completion of your thesis requires that you be somewhere between tasks 6 and 7 at the end of *ECON 4309*.

## Prerequisites and Texts

Course enrollment is granted by the Economics Honors Program only. To be considered, the students must have a high cumulative and economics GPA. In most cases, the tools required to complete the thesis are presented in your undergraduate economics courses. Past experience however suggests a number of areas where students need further emphasis.

**Doing:** This text offers research guidelines:

Greenlaw, S.A. (2005) *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. *Required*.

**Writing:** The following texts offer writing guidelines:

McCloskey, D.N. (1999) *Economical Writing*, Second Edition. Long Grove: Waveland Press, Inc. *Required*.

Strunk, W. and E.B. White (2000) *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. New York: Longman. *Recommended*.

**Econometrics:** The vast majority of undergraduate thesis in economics use the tools of econometrics. So, it is strongly recommended that students complete *ECON 4818 Introduction to Econometrics* this Fall. Useful econometric texts include:

Kennedy, P. (2003) *A Guide to Econometrics*, Fifth Edition. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Wooldridge, J. (2002) *Introductory Econometrics: A Modern Approach*. Mason: Thomson South-Western.

## Outline

Here is an outline of the class activities.

**1. Readings and Discussions:** We will be discussing a number of research papers from economics. The discussion will focus on the elements of research.

**Assignment 1:** Write a critical review of a paper that is outside your area of interests. For this paper, you will lead the class discussion. The critical reviews are due on the day of discussion.

**Assignment 2:** Write a critical review of a paper in your area of interests. For this paper, you will lead the discussion. The critical reviews are due on the day of discussion.

**2. Research Proposal Development:** To ensure progress in your thesis, you will complete a number of development exercises leading up to your final research proposal.

**Assignment 3:** Write a literature review for your area of interest, and present it to the class.

**Assignment 4:** Write a report to defend your research question. It must also place your question in the relevant literature.

**Assignment 5:** Write a report that describes the methodology and data sources required to answer your research question.

**3. Research Proposal:** Following from the development exercises, you will write and present your finished research proposal to the class and to your advisor.

**Assignment 6:** Write a research proposal and present it to the class.

## Evaluation

Critical Reviews (Assignments 1 and 2)	10 %
Literature Review (Assignment 3)	15 %
Reports (Assignments 4 and 5)	10 %
Research Proposal (Assignment 6)	25 %
Presentations (Assignments 1 o 6)	20 %
Class Participation	20 %

**Evaluative Criteria:** To earn a passing grade in the course, you must complete and turn in your research proposal by the last day of class. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. I will evaluate the written portions of Assignments 1 to 6. Your classmates and I will evaluate your presentations. Participation points will be awarded for 1. the evaluation of other students presentations, 2. your written questions to the different presentations, and 3. general participation. Finally, attendance is mandatory for all scheduled classes.