

Senior Thesis Seminar in Economics

IECO/ECON 401, Spring 2008

MW 2:40-3:55, WGR 203 and 211

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/aml6/ec401.htm>

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The principal aim of this course is to develop the skills and techniques needed for carrying out a substantive original research project in economics. To achieve this purpose, the course will focus on the writing and presentation of a senior thesis. Students may choose from a wide variety of topics. Along the way, students will learn how to evaluate scholarly literature, formulate and model a hypothesis, locate data and test the hypothesis, write an elegant paper and give a convincing presentation. This course marks the culmination of the economics and international economics majors and an introduction to the world of scholarly research.

REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to attend and participate in all class sessions and complete all assigned reading before the class. All students are expected to abide by the university honor code, which can be found at <http://www.georgetown.edu/honor>. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help one another throughout the course, but their work must be original and completed independently. If you have even the slightest inkling that you might be violating the honor code, stop what you are doing, consult the website, and, if you are still unsure, ask a professor. Final papers will become part of the database at turnitin.com.

The research paper: Each student will be responsible for writing an article-length paper, approximately 20-25 pages in length, excluding tables, charts, figures, etc. In the paper, students are expected to evaluate, critique, test, and build upon a current debate of their choosing in the field of economics. Students should develop competing hypotheses, model them formally, and test them using quantitative methods. The final papers will account for 50% of the final grade. The papers should be written as if they were being presented at a professional conference or submitted to a scholarly journal. Final papers are due (both a hard copy and an electronic copy) at the beginning of the last class meeting on April 28.

The thesis is to be written in a series of steps. Each step is marked by the completion of a short paper or class presentation. The steps are as follows:

- 1. Paper topic:** students are responsible for selecting a topic for their paper in consultation with the professors. A one-page topic statement, consisting of tentative title and abstract, must be submitted to both professors by January 9th. (An email was sent to the class list on December 17th.) One of the professors will contact you, either approving your topic or asking for revision. Revisions are due on January 16. The professor who approves your topic will serve as your thesis mentor for the remainder of the semester. Failure to obtain an approved paper topic will result in withdrawal from the course.
- 2. The research proposal:** Once the topic is approved, each student must submit a formal research proposal in writing and make a spoken presentation to the class. The written proposal should be 2-3 pages in length. It should state the research question to be answered, why the question is important, and provide an overall strategy for answering the question. A preliminary outline, list of references, and potential data sources should also be included. The in-class presentations will be strictly limited to 10 minutes -- 6 minutes for the speaker, followed by 4 minutes of discussion. Paper proposals are due in hard copy to both professors at the time of the presentation.
- 3. Literature review and model:** a detailed review of the literature and a formal statement of the theoretical model. The aim of this 3-5 page paper is to state the theory that you intend to test and to explain how it relates to the existing literature. Students will meet in groups of four or five with their mentor to discuss this paper. A hard copy of the paper must be sent to your mentor and an electronic copy to your group by 10 am on the day before the meeting.
- 4. Data sources and empirical strategy:** a detailed presentation of the data and appropriate estimators. The aim of this 3-5 page paper is to present the data you have obtained and explain the econometric methods you intend to use in testing your hypothesis. Students will meet in groups of three or four with their mentor to discuss this paper. A hard copy of the paper must be sent to your mentor and an electronic copy to your group by 10 am on the day before the meeting.
- 5. Preliminary empirical results:** a detailed presentation of the econometric estimates. The aim of this 3-5 page paper is to present the results of the first pass at your empirical analysis. Students will meet in groups with their mentor to discuss this paper. As these are preliminary results, you will almost certainly be asked to revise or extend your empirical analysis, before the final presentation. A hard copy of the paper must be sent to your mentor and an electronic copy to your group by 10 am on the day before the meeting.
- 6. Final presentation:** Each student will also present a penultimate version of his or her paper to the class. Student presentations should be no more than 15 minutes in length and will be followed by 10 minutes of questions and answers. The

presentation should be treated as if it were a formal paper presentation at a scholarly conference. Use of overheads, PowerPoint slides, and other presentation materials are encouraged. A complete draft of your paper is due by 5 pm seven (7) days prior to the day of your classroom presentation. One hard copy shall be given to your mentor. Electronic copies must be delivered to two assigned student referees.

- 7. Referee reports:** each student will serve as a referee and discussant for the penultimate paper of two other students. Written referee reports of 2-3 pages must be provided to the paper writer and each professor the time the paper is presented. Referees also act as discussants and are responsible for facilitating classroom discussion when the author presents the penultimate version of the paper to the class.

Grades will be determined as follows:

➤ Written paper proposal	5%
➤ Write-up of the literature review and model	5%
➤ Write-up of the data sources and empirical strategy	5%
➤ Write-up of the preliminary results	5%
➤ Penultimate paper submission and final presentation	10%
➤ Referee reports on your colleagues' papers	10% (5% ea.)
➤ Class participation	10%
➤ Quality of final paper	50%

All assignments will be down graded a letter grade per day after the due date. Except in truly extraordinary circumstances, no extensions will be granted.

The Carroll Round is scheduled for April 17-20. This is an excellent opportunity to see students from elsewhere present their research and we encourage those of you writing on international topics you to consider applying to present your work. (The due date is March 22.) For more information, you can consult the web page, <http://carrollround.georgetown.edu> . We would like all students in this seminar to attend at least 2 sessions of the Round, regardless of whether or not your own work will be presented.

Important due dates

January 9	Research topic papers due (Assignment #1).
January 16	Approved research topics due and required for continuation.
January 28/30	Research proposals and presentations (Assignment #2).
February 11/13	Literature reviews and presentations (Assignment #3).
February 25/27	Empirical strategies and presentations (Assignment #4).
March 17/19	Preliminary results (Assignment #5).
March 22	Carroll Round application due date.
April 7/9	Rough drafts due (7 days prior to presentation).
April 14/16	Referee reports due. Presentations of penultimate versions.
April 28	Final papers due at 2:40, beginning of class (one hard copy, and one electronic copy emailed to both professors).