

Economics 495S  
Honors Seminar I Research Workshop  
Fall 2019  
T, TH 3:05pm – 4:20pm

Professor: Michelle Connolly  
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Meetings: Sign up on <https://michelleconnolly.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php>

Required Textbook: *Writing in Sociology: A Brief Guide*. Cary Moskowitz and Lynn Smith-Lovin. New York: Oxford University Press. 2017.

**Honors Program:** <https://econ.duke.edu/undergraduate/current-students/honors-program>

### **The Workshop Environment**

The goal of this two semester workshop sequence is first to help you identify a novel and feasible research topic, second to identify and undertake a reasonable methodology to answer your chosen research question, and last to clearly communicate your research and findings in the form of a poster and an honors thesis which will be able to pass the departmental honors committee after a reading by three professors.

We will spend the first few weeks of classes learning about what constitutes novel research and how research papers are created and written. We will also discuss resources available to help you with your research and writing [ex. EconLit, GoogleScholar, Joel Herndon and Mark Thomas (Data Librarians), STATA classes and support, faculty advisors, Writing Tutor, Econometric Support]. Once you have chosen your topic, you will present the relevant papers in the existing literature on the topic and explain how you will use these in creating your own research product. This will help you acquire working knowledge of theories and empirical research in the topic of your choosing. If you are doing empirical research, you will collect the relevant data this semester with the goal of being able to present summary statistics by the end of this semester. Next semester, in Econ 496S, you will complete your research project, and turn in your honors thesis.

A fundamental feature of research, as opposed to traditional classroom learning, is that it is independent and self-motivated. At the same time, researchers continually share thoughts and ideas with colleagues. Academic workshops and conferences are the main venues through which research ideas are developed, dissected, refined, and disseminated.

This course is designed to establish the workshop tradition at the undergraduate level. We want to encourage an interchange of research ideas, problems, and strategies amongst yourselves. My role is that of a facilitator and mentor. I am here, as are the other students, to help you succeed at undertaking novel research.

## Choosing a Research Question

This is likely one of the few times in life where you will have the opportunity to choose a research topic purely based on your own intellectual interests.

- Choose something that excites you
- Choose something feasible:
  - Can you state the question or relationship that you want to analyze? Must be specific. I.e. not I'm interested in income inequality. Instead, I'm interested in the impact of local income inequality within a school district on student graduation rates, or on public school versus private school or charter school enrollment, or....
  - Can you analyze it empirically or theoretically?
  - Are there publically available data?
  - Are there enough observations?
    - Ex. Two years of annual data for 20 countries means only 40 observations. Not enough for empirical analysis.
    - More disaggregated data tend to offer the most observations and the best chances at establishing causal relationships rather than simply demonstrating correlations.
  - Theoretical approach means being able to create a full model which yields either closed form solutions, or simulated or calibrated solutions. It is not sufficient to just suggest a few proposed relationships.
- Choose something of value. Also, in this section it is ideal to choose a topic where I can give you greater value added. I.e. for Finance, better to go to Professor Kim's section. For International Finance (or Sports), better to go to Professor Kimbrough's section.

## Resources

- Past theses: <https://sites.duke.edu/econhonors/>
- Departmental fellowships, grants, and information related to Honors are listed at: <https://econ.duke.edu/undergraduate/current-students/honors-program>
- STATA license for students in this course. Limited licenses – Do not share.
  1. Download Stata/SE 15 from <https://public.econ.duke.edu/stata>
  2. Enter STATA information for AY 19-20 which is posted on our Sakai Site.

## Assignment Instructions

- Always turn in a hard copy to me. *Single* sided, double spaced, 12 font, with page #s.
- Upload **word doc** of assignments in Dropbox using filename based on assignment number x: [LastName\\_Econ496\\_MonthDay2018\\_Ax](#).

- This is scientific writing, not creative writing. Simplicity and clarity matter more than flourish.
- Follow Template provided in Sakai: put a title, your name, course, date and page numbers on each assignment.
- Number all equations.
- Number and provide an explanatory/descriptive title for all tables and figures.
- Use words, not variable names in tables and discussions.
- Be concise! Say only what you need and say it clearly. Ideally, your final thesis including *everything* should be less than 30 pages. I will not review anything longer than 40 pages.
- There are specific requests for each assignment – including formatting and max length. If you do not follow these requests, I will return it to you to redo and return. You will automatically lose 5% on the assignment grade if this occurs.

*General Schedule:*

Class 1	Review of Course and Resources.  <i>Readings:</i> p. 34 “Start Smart” Section to top of p.45; pp. 80-81; Ch. 5; Appendix A on presentations – <i>Read and Incorporate before your first presentation.</i>
Classes 2-3	<b><i>Individual Meetings:</i></b> Come prepared with two relevant academic papers (found through EconLit or GoogleScholar) so we can discuss your possible topic and the feasibility of your desired approach. <b><i>These replace August 29 and Sept 3 classes.</i></b>
Classes 4-8	Student presentations of paper or papers most closely related to topic of interest. Presenter chooses a student to take notes of comments during presentation. (1-2 students per class)  <i>Readings:</i> One of past theses receiving either Best Thesis Prize or Finalist for Best Thesis. Be prepared to discuss in class.
Class 7 (Sept. 17)	<b>Assignment 1</b> (20 pts). <i>Written Research Topic.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard copy due in class.</li> <li>• Upload in Dropbox using filename <a href="#">LastName_Econ495_MonthDay2018_A1</a>.</li> <li>• Give a working title, include your name, course and date.</li> <li>• Min. two paragraphs – max two pages</li> </ul>
Class 9 (Sept. 24)	<b>Assignment 2</b> (20 pts). <i>STATA EXERCISE</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may work in groups of two to three students (each submits separately to Dropbox)</li> <li>• Upload to Dropbox using filename <a href="#">LastName_Econ495_MonthDay2018_A2</a>.</li> </ul>

Classes 9-12	Student presentations of their proposed topic (1-2 students per class).
Class 12 (Oct 3)	<p><b>Assignment 3</b> (20 pts). <i>First Research Proposal</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard copy in class, upload to Dropbox</li> <li>• Include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Title Page</b> (with current date)</li> <li>○ <b>Introduction</b> (thesis topic in bold in first or second paragraph – max 3 pgs.)</li> <li>○ <b>Literature Review</b> (synthesize don't summarize - max 3 pgs.)</li> <li>○ <b>Reference List</b></li> <li>○ One Paragraph Research Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Check rubric and be concise! (<b>Review Ch.5</b>)</li> </ul>
Class 13 (Oct 10)	Class discussion of Assignment 3.
October 23	<i>ONLINE HONORS APPLICATION FORM DUE TO ECOTEACH.</i> Requires faculty advisor signature.
Classes 14-19	<p>Student presentations with theoretical framework /empirical approach. This should include a theoretical framework upon which empirical work will be done, or the beginning assumptions for a theoretical model.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Chapters 6 – 9. Note that Economists use APA citation style not the ASA style mentioned in the book.</p>
Class 17 (Oct 17)	<p><b>Assignment 4</b> (100 pts).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard copy in class, upload to Dropbox</li> <li>• EMAIL FILE TO YOUR ADVISOR and cc me</li> <li>• Edit based on feedback from Assignment 3 and presentations</li> <li>• New Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Theoretical Framework and/or Empirical Specification</b></li> <li>○ Update your one paragraph research plan as needed</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Max 11 pages</li> </ul>
Classes 20-27	Student presentations of their updated research WITH DATA SECTION, INCLUDING SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR KEY DATA. This should include a data section, or further modeling advances for a theoretical model.
Class 28 (Dec 5)	<p><b>Assignment 5</b> (100 pts).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard copy due in class, upload to Dropbox, email to your advisor.</li> </ul>

- Include a title page with a **draft abstract**, introduction, literature review, theoretical framework/empirical framework, **DATA SECTION (INCLUDING SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR KEY DATA)**, and a one paragraph plan for the rest of your research. (max 16 pages)
- **Review Ch.6 of textbook before turning in assignment.**

<b>Grades:</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>Presentations.</b> Start with 85%, move up or down based on content and presentation (missed presentation = -20% of this grade)
	<b>15%</b>	<b>Workshop Participation.</b> Start with 85%, moves up or down based on valuable participation (unexcused absence = -5% of this grade)
	<b>10%</b>	<b>Reading Syllabus and Following Instructions:</b> Dropbox Folder and Communication with Advisor. Each student must have individually complete folder (even when co-authoring) with appropriately named files and must have emailed Assignments 4 and 5 to advisor. Start with 100%, moves down if need to be reminded of instructions.
	<b>55%</b>	<b>Assignments.</b> Start with 85%, moves up based on content and improvements (-5% per day late, -5% if exceeds max length, - 5% if asked to resubmit)

Resources for avoiding Plagiarism:

“Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism: Documentation Guidelines”:  
<http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/index.html>

“Plagiarism: Its Nature and Consequences”: <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/index.html>

The Writing Studio: <http://uwp.duke.edu/writing-studio/resources/working-with-sources>