Economics 495S  
Honors Seminar I Research Workshop  
Fall 2020: T, TH 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm, Soc. Psy. 129

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Schedule Meetings: https://michelleconnolly.acuitiescheduling.com/schedule.php  
Attend Meetings: https://duke.zoom.us/my/michelleconnollyzoom


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

The Workshop Environment

The goal of this two semester 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 third to clearly communicate your research and findings in the form of a poster and an honors thesis 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]. You will present relevant papers in the existing literature on the topic of your choosing and explain how your own research product will depart from these. 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 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 replicates 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. To encourage open discussions, we will use the Chatham House Rule. This means that participants may use information from discussions but are not allowed to reveal the individual who made a particular comment. Moreover, is an honor code violation to use online recordings or images from class against another participant.
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 wisely.

- Choose something that excites you.
- Choose something feasible:
  - Can you state the question or specific 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, if you are taking my 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 this academic year which is posted on our Sakai Site.

Note: Given the uniqueness of this semester, dates and exact assignments may change.
Assignment Instructions

- If attending in person, 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_MonthDayYear_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.
- Be concise! Say only what you need and say it clearly. Ideally, your final thesis including everything should be less than 35 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 (Aug 18) Review of Course and Resources.

Assignment 1 (20 pts). Paragraph on Possible Research Topic

- Cite two academic papers (can find using EconLit or GoogleScholar) most closely related to possible topic
- List possible public data sources if empirical
- Discuss the size of possible data set
- Hard copy due in class for in person students
- Upload to Sakai Dropbox using filename LastName_Econ495_MonthDayYear_A1.

Readings: p. 34 “Start Smart” Section to top of p.45; pp. 80-81; Ch. 5; Appendix A on presentations – Read and Incorporate before your first presentation.

Classes 2-8 One to two student powerpoint presentations per class of paper or papers most closely related to topic of interest. Presenter chooses a student to take notes of comments during presentation.

Individual Zoom Meetings: Come prepared with two relevant academic papers so we can discuss your possible topic and the feasibility of your desired approach. These will replace August 25 and Sept 1 classes.
Readings: One of past theses receiving either Best Thesis Prize or Finalist for Best Thesis. Be prepared to discuss in class.

Class 7 (Sept. 8)  **Assignment 2** (10 pts).  *Written Research Topic.*
- Hard copy due in class for in person students
- Upload in Sakai Dropbox using filename  
  LastName_Econ495_MonthDayYear_A2.
- Give a working title, include your name, course and date.
- Min. two paragraphs – max two pages

Class 9 (Sept. 10)  **Assignment 3** (10 pts).  *STATA EXERCISE*
- may work in groups of two to three students (each submits separately to Dropbox)
- Upload to Dropbox using filename 
  LastName_Econ495_MonthDayYear_A3.

Classes 9-12  Student presentations of their proposed topic (1-2 students per class).

Class 10 (Sept. 15)  **Assignment 4** (30 pts).  *Detailed Outline of Introduction and Literature Review.*  *Assignment will be peer reviewed. Each student will review 3 papers and assign a score out of 10.*
- Hard copy in class, upload to Dropbox
- Include
  - Title (with current date)
  - Introduction
  - Literature Review
- Check rubric and be concise! (Review Ch.5)

Class 12 (Sept. 22)  **Assignment 5** (50 pts).  *First Research Proposal.*
- Hard copy in class, upload to Dropbox
- Include
  - Title Page (with current date)
  - Introduction (thesis topic in bold in first or second paragraph – max 3 pgs.)
  - Literature Review (synthesize don’t summarize - max 3 pgs.)
  - Reference List
  - One Paragraph Research Plan
- Check rubric and be concise! (Review Ch.5)

Class 13 (Sept. 24)  Class discussion of Assignment 5.
October 7  
**ONLINE HONORS APPLICATION FORM DUE TO ECOTEACH.** Requires faculty advisor signature (This is your *primary advisor* – not me. I am your secondary advisor.)

Classes 14-19  
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.

*Readings:* Chapters 6 – 9. Note that Economists use APA citation style not the ASA style mentioned in the book.

Class 17 (Oct 8)  
**Assignment 6** (100 pts).  
- Hard copy in class, upload to Dropbox  
- EMAIL FILE TO YOUR ADVISOR and cc me  
- Edit based on feedback from Assignment 5 and presentations  
- New Sections:  
  o **Theoretical Framework** and/or **Empirical Specification**  
  o **Theoretical Framework:** Why (and how) are you considering particular variables?  
  o **Empirical Specification:** Given the variables you ideally want to consider, what regression will be feasible? **Write out the equation for the regression.** Focus on variable subscripts denoting whether a variable varies by individual, by location, by time, or all of the above.  
- Max 12 pages

Classes 20-29  
Student presentations of their updated research with data section, **INCLUDING SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR KEY DATA**, or further modeling advances for a theoretical model.

Class 29 (Nov 19)  
**Assignment 7** (100 pts).  
- Hard copy due in class, upload to Dropbox, email to your advisor.  
- 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.
Grades:

- **20%** Presentations. (missed presentation = -20% of this grade)
- **15%** Valuable Workshop Participation. (unexcused absence = -5%)
- **10%** Reading Syllabus and Following Instructions: 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 6 and 7 to advisor.
- **55%** Assignments. (-5% per day late, -5% if exceeds max length, -5% if asked to resubmit)

Key Dates:

- Oct 7: Honors Application Forms Due
- March 31: Abstract and Advisor Permission Due
- April 9: Honors Thesis Due
- April 16: Honors Poster Due
- April 20: Honors Poster Session

Resources for avoiding Plagiarism:

- “Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism: Documentation Guidelines”: [http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/index.html](http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/index.html)

Instructions for creating tables from STATA: from Saheel Chodavadia 2020:

“If you haven't used it before, you'll need to download it (very easily) from the STATA database. Here's the code for that: --ssc install outreg2--

After that, the help file for the --outreg2-- command is excellent to learn more. The most useful options for the --outreg2-- command are "replace", "excel", "dec(x)", "label", "append", "replace", "cfilename" )" and "ctitle(" ")". If you add in the "excel" option, it will output the table to an excel file to wherever you want it on your computer. After that, it's pretty simple to copy/paste that table over into word or powerpoint. Do note that you'll have to run the appropriate - -outreg2-- command after each regression you run for it to work properly.”