

**FALL 2017 ECON 495S**  
**Honors Seminar I**

**Prof. Grace Kim**

**Office Hours:** MW 2-4p.m.

& by appointment

**Office:** SSB#329C

**E-mail:** grace.kim@duke.edu

**Course website is at the following address:**

<https://sakai.duke.edu/portal.site/ECON495SFall2017>

**Class Time:** 10:05-11:20 a.m.

**Class Location:** TBD (Allen#229 for now)

**Campus weather closures:** [www.duke.edu](http://www.duke.edu)

**Welcome to the Honors Seminar Research Workshop!** The goal of this Research Workshop is to get you started on a research project for your honors thesis. We will spend the first few weeks of classes learning about research methodology, how ideas are developed into written research papers, and the resources available to help you with your research and writing. 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. Finally, you will develop a research proposal. In Econ 496S next semester, you will complete your research project and submit your official honors thesis.

**Prerequisites:** ECON 205D, ECON 208D, and ECON 210D. ECON495S is the first guided-research course in a two-semester honors sequence.

**Requirements:** Course requires completion of research proposal suitable for development as honors thesis in Economics 496S. Numerous presentations and full participation are fundamental to the nature of this honors seminar research workshop.

**Required Materials:** There is no required textbook. There is a STATA network license at no cost to the students in this course. Download Stata/SE 15 from <http://public.econ.duke.edu/stata/> and use the serial number, code, and authorization noted in class to activate the license. You should familiarize yourself with information from the Economics Department websites below.

*Honors Program:* <http://econ.duke.edu/undergraduate/current-students/honors-program>  
(instructions for requirements, guidelines, formatting, deadlines)

*Resources:* <http://econ.duke.edu/undergraduate/current-students/honors-program/instructions-resources-templates>

(resources for research and writing and templates)

*Past Honors Theses:*

<http://dialog.econ.duke.edu/honors/>

**Course Help:** My role in this course is very different from that of a lecture course. Unlike a lecture course where information is predominantly transmitted from instructor to student, the honors seminar course is a group endeavor. My role in this course is that of a facilitator. I am here, as are the other students in the class, to help you succeed at undertaking novel research. Therefore, I will serve a resource, sounding board, and mentor for you. There are also departmental resources (including research and writing support, fellowships and grants) to help support your research.

**Nature of the Course:** A fundamental feature of research, as opposed to classroom learning, is that it is independent and self-motivated. At the same time, researchers continually share thoughts and ideas with colleagues. This sharing is often at irregular intervals and very informal. However, research workshops are one of the main regular and more structured venues through which research ideas are developed, disseminated, dissected, and refined. At Duke, as at most research-oriented economics departments, we have weekly workshops for faculty and graduate students who share common interests in any of the major fields.

The goal of this course is to try and establish the Research Workshop tradition at the undergraduate level. We want to encourage an interchange of research ideas, problems, and strategies among undergraduates and faculty similar to the sort of interchange that now goes on between graduate students and faculty. The research process involves the initial creation of the idea behind a research project. This often times evolves from conversations with colleagues. We then work on the topic and present it at workshops in-house. We further revise based on feedback from the workshop. We then present at conferences or seminars at other universities. This provides us with another layer of feedback. Finally, we submit the research to journals. There we receive on average two referee reports, as well as comments from the editor of the journal. This gives us a final (and often brutal) level of feedback in the creation of new, unique research. Similar interchange and feedback will be expected as you present your own nascent research project, share literature related to your topic with the group, collect data, and eventually write up and present in this honors seminar your research proposal to be developed into the honors thesis next semester.

**Course Grades:** Course grade determination is as follows:

Research proposals (iterations)	50%
Presentations	30%
<u>Course participation</u>	<u>20%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Check ACES online for **official course grades** and Sakai Course Gradebook online for **individual scores**.

**General Course Schedule:**

<b>8/28/2017</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>First day of class.</b>
8/30,9/4,6	WMW	Overview of Course and Resources. Identification of Research Topics and related Literature. Identification of Faculty Advisor. Individual Meetings.
9/11*,13,18,20	MWMW	Literature Presentations. Papers related to research idea.
<b>9/11</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Assignment1 Written Research Topic hard copy due</b> in class.
9/25*,27,10/2,4	MWMW	Presentations of initial research proposals.
<b>9/25</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Assignment2 Initial Research Proposal hard copy due</b> in class (also email the file to your advisor and me). Introduction and Literature Review sections.
<b>10/9</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No Class. University Fall Break.</b>
10/11,16,18	WMW	Individual Meetings.

**Approximately F 10/20/2017** ***ONLINE HONORS APPLICATION FORM DUE TO ECOTEACH. Requires faculty advisor signature.***

10/23,25,30,11/1	MWMW	Presentations of updated research with theoretical/empirical framework.
11/6*,8,13,15	MWMW	Presentations of updated research with data overview, summary statistics.
<b>11/6</b>		<b>Assignment3 Revised Research Proposal hard copy due</b> in class (also email the file to your advisor and me). Added Theoretical/empirical framework section.
<b>11/20,22</b>	<b>MW</b>	<b>No Class. University Thanksgiving Break.</b>
11/27,29,12/4	MWM	Discussion and feedback on ongoing research.
<b>12/6/2017</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>Last day of class. Assignment4 Final Research Proposal hard copy due</b> in class (also email the file to your adviser and me). Added Data Section and research plan going forward.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to make syllabus, grading, and schedule adjustments.

## **Research Proposal Guidelines**

Your overall course requirement this semester is to produce a proposal to conduct original research. The proposal will culminate next semester in a final research paper that will be submitted as your official Honors Thesis. Your proposal should be structured according to the following outline:

I. Introduction - The introduction should state and motivate your topic. Early on, let the reader know what you will be analyzing. Then explain why is it interesting and relevant today. You may also provide necessary background institutional detail. You should briefly place your work in the context of what has already been done, with the goal of identifying the gap in the literature you intend to fill. Finally, you should clearly state your thesis – the single main argument of your paper. Finally, you should include a road map outlining the structure of your proposal.

II. Literature Review - Here you should more fully discuss the work that has already been done on your subject. Focus on the research that is most closely related to your own work. The goal of this section is to place your work into the context of what has already been done. It should be clear by the end of this section what your original contribution to the literature will be.

III. Theoretical Framework - Describe the relevant economic theory. This is, most likely, not where you will make an original contribution. Perhaps you will be testing a particular theory. You should lay that theory out here (using graphs and equations as appropriate). What does the theory suggest ought to be true empirically? Perhaps the theory is not decisive. What remains is an empirical question you intend to answer. Outline the theory here and demonstrate how it does not offer a clear prediction. Leave the reader with an understanding of how the theory informs your work. Perhaps it offers a clear testable prediction. Perhaps it will only inform your empirical specification (e.g., what are likely and appropriate explanatory variables?)

IV. Data (For Empirical Papers) - What data will you use in your work? Describe the data. What is its source? Why are these the appropriate or best data for your project? Acknowledge any weaknesses. By the end of the semester you will want to have your data in hand and know that it is operational. The best way to know this is to have run some basic descriptive statistics (e.g., means and standard deviations). These should be included in this section along with a discussion of these statistics. Later on this section might include more detail on how you may have created particular variables for your own use in your particular project. (Extensive detail along these lines might be left for a data appendix.)

V. Empirical Specification (for Empirical Papers) - This section should describe how you plan to empirically estimate your model. What are the dependent variables? What are the independent variables? Do you have expectations about the signs and/or the magnitudes of the coefficients you plan to estimate? Ultimately, this section will also include your findings from your study and may also include a comparison of your results to what others have already found.

VI. Conclusion - This will obviously be largely left until your study is complete as you will want to summarize your findings in this section. You may also want to discuss any policy implications of your study as well as leave the reader with a sense of the questions that remain unanswered.