

191A-B: Senior Essay Seminar, Fall '09-Winter '10,

These classes will help you apply the tools you have learned in your core and elective coursework to (1) do your own research (to move from being a *consumer* of research to a *producer* of research) and (2) critically assess other's research.

Texts:

- Strunk & White, *Elements of Style*
- William Thompson, *Advice to the Young Economist*

Goals:

- For you to learn how to present your ideas, both written and orally.
- For you to learn how to ask, research, and answer a question.
- For you to learn how to listen to other people's ideas, ask insightful questions and provide useful comments/suggestions.

Conducting a Research Project (based on Ashenfelter, Levine, Zimmerman, "Statistics and Econometrics")

1. Ask a question (and think about why the answer to your question is important).
Make sure your question is not too broad!
2. Find out who else has asked your question (or a similar one). How did they go about answering it – what were the strengths/weaknesses with their approach? Look for articles at JSTOR, NBER, Econlit, Google Scholar, Google search but add following condition "site:.edu" or "site:.gov".
3. What can you add to the literature? This is a must for a PhD in economics. GREAT if you can do this as undergrads
4. What is the answer to your question or what is the most you can conclude given your research? What avenues do you see for future research?
5. Your model is an article or note in *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Journal of Political Economy*

The Department of Economics at Princeton University requires all their undergraduate majors write a senior thesis and they have an outstanding and extensive website regarding the writing of a senior thesis. I highly recommend that you review "Senior Thesis Program Handbook" at <http://www.princeton.edu/economics/undergraduate/#SIW>

An all around useful web site, created by Bill Goffe, is Resources for Economists on the Internet, at <http://www.aeaweb.org/RFE/>

Meeting other Faculty

I'd like you meet the faculty member(s) with interests most similar to your own, based on your research topic. We will talk more about this as you start working on your research topics the first few weeks of class. There are many benefits of meeting early in

your project: getting helpful early guidance and possibly really getting to know one of our professors. There are also costs: you may use up a valuable visit (faculty time is very scarce) and learn information you could have easily figured out on your own.

Presentations

At the end of the first quarter, each of you will present your research. Your presentations will be 20 minutes. This is an opportunity to present your work and get feedback from the entire class and me on your research idea.

Written papers

A preliminary draft of your paper is due at the last class meeting of the Fall quarter, **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2009**. We will hold paper conferences during the final exam week, December 7 – 11. First drafts of papers will be due mid-February, followed by more paper conferences and final drafts of papers due during the last week of classes of the Winter quarter.

Grading

Grades are assigned for the full 2-quarter sequence. The grade recorded at the end of Fall quarter is “IP,” “in progress.” Dropping the course by the end of the ninth week in the Fall results in the notation “W.”

Class Attendance

Some scheduling revisions will take place during the quarter. Please try to attend all scheduled class meetings.

Course timeline

Fall Quarter 2009 (T-TH 2:00-3:30, Sequoyah Hall 244)

Thu, 9/24 Class Introduction

Tues, 9/29 please bring your laptops (if you have a laptop) to class fully charged.

We'll be doing some hands-on web literature search exercises, with the leadership of Ms. Adele Barsh, UCSD's economics librarian.

Please send Ms. Barsh <abarsh@ucsd.edu> (with a copy to me) a short (2 sentences is plenty) description of your planned paper topic. Something like: "industrial organization of newspaper industry," or "inheritance tax effect on long term capital accumulation and economic growth." This will allow Ms. Barsh to target some of the topics for literature search. We can change topics later if we need to. We just need this to get started on the literature search exercise.

10/1, 10/6 Present your planned topic to class for discussion, suggestions

10/8 – 10/15 TBA

10/20 Written paper topic proposal: includes at least 3 references and data you will use.

11/17 – 12/1 Oral presentations of preliminary paper drafts.

12/3 Preliminary paper drafts due

12/7-12/11 Paper conferences

Winter Quarter 2010 (TBA)