

Econ 496  
Fall 2021 Quarter

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**Course Description and Goals:** This course provides a forum for undergraduate honors students to begin to pursue independent thesis research. The course consists of a limited number of class meetings aimed at helping students understand the research process and develop necessary techniques. There will also be a series of one-on-one meetings with the course instructor with the goal of providing individualized guidance through the research process. To this end, there will be a series of deadlines throughout the quarter to ensure that steady progress is being made. Students will receive critical/constructive feedback on their ideas and work, both from the instructor and from fellow students. By the end of the course, students will complete a 12-15 page research proposal, which they will continue to develop in Econ 497 during the Winter quarter with an individual advisor.

**Class Meetings:** The course is scheduled for 3:30 – 5:20 on Tuesdays in Denny 110. We will only meet on dates indicated on the schedule below.

**Prerequisites:** This course is restricted to economics majors who have been admitted to the Economics Honors Program. You should have taken Econ 396 in the preceding Spring quarter. Additionally, training in econometrics or any other quantitative courses will be extremely useful in carrying out your thesis research.

**Textbook:** There is no textbook for this course. Don't buy one.

**Grading:** The final grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Homework Assignments 25%
2. Class Participation (including feedback during others' presentations) 10%
3. Peer Feedback Assignment 5%
4. Presentations 20%
5. Final Proposal 40%

As this is a course designed for self-selected, motivated, high-achieving students, the target grade range is different than in typical 400-level economics courses. I will provide details on the first day of class.

**Homework:** There will be three homework assignments, in addition to a peer review assignment where you will review other students' submissions of HW#3. These homework assignments will feed into your presentations and provide deadlines to ensure that you are making progress as the quarter progresses.

**Presentations:** You will give two presentations during the quarter. The first will be a shorter in-progress presentation in which you present your research question. The second will include all aspects of the final proposal. While these are graded, the primary purpose is to receive constructive feedback and to engage other smart people (your classmates!) to help your research along.

**Class Participation:** Class participation is mandatory. Classes will consist of a series of discussions followed by, later in the quarter, class presentations by students. Engagement with the ideas and concepts, including providing constructive/critical feedback, is essential to this process.

**Laptops/Tablets in Class:** I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class. I have found that they make class discussion more difficult. This class is necessarily interactive, and I find that having a screen in front of you tends to detract from active participation.

**Office Hours:** Office hours specifically for this course are noted in the schedule below. These will be held in Savery 327. I also have scheduled office hours on **Thursday from 1:30pm to 3:30pm**. These are preferably done in person but I will try to accommodate requests to meet virtually via Zoom.

**Schedule Flexibility:** Due to family obligations, **I will likely have to reschedule some combination of class meetings and/or mandatory office hours**. Updates will be communicated via Canvas.

**Contact:** The easiest way to contact me is via email. Please put "496" in the title to the email so that I will know that it is not spam. It is okay to ask simple questions over email, but if you have more complicated questions, including clarifications about concepts or about paper topics, then it is usually better to come to office hours.

Week (Tuesday)	Topic / Assignment	Notes
Oct 5	Class Introduction Developing a Topic	In-class meeting.
Oct 12	<b>HW1 due Oct 11</b>	Mandatory Office hours #1. Tues and Thurs 3:30 – 5:30
Oct 19	Finding data, developing a question	In-class meeting.
Oct 26	<b>HW2 due Oct 25</b>	Mandatory office hours #2. Tues and Thurs 3:30 – 5:30
Nov 2	In-progress presentations (first half)	In-class meeting.
Nov 9	In-progress presentations (second half)	In-class meeting. Mandatory office hours #3 (first half). Thurs 3:30 – 5:30
Nov 16	Literature Reviews Finding an Adviser Peer Feedback	In-class meeting. Mandatory office hours #3 (second half). Thurs 3:30 – 5:30
Nov 23	<b>HW3 due Nov 12</b>	Optional Office Hours Tues
Nov 30	<b>Group 1: Final presentations</b> <b>Group 2: Peer feedback due</b>	In-class meeting.
Dec 7	<b>Group 1: Peer feedback due</b> <b>Group 2: Final Presentations</b>	In-class meeting. Optional office hours Thurs 3:30 – 5:30 (might get rescheduled)
Dec 14	<b>Final proposals due Dec 17</b>	Optional office hours by appointment