Economics 396A
Senior Research Seminar

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Seminars: Mondays 7:30-10:00 pm, Stokes 010

Course Objectives:
The senior thesis experience at Haverford College is meant to be the culmination of a 4 year educational process. This process aims to develop a student’s scholarly interests while challenging them to become independent thinkers. The year-long (two-semester) Senior Research Seminar in the Economics Dept. is designed to impart skills and techniques essential to students undertaking their original independent research projects. The first (fall) semester of the course will include workshops on thesis writing skills, data collection and management issues using Excel and Stata, and presentations by visiting scholars followed by student discussants critiquing the paper being presented. The chief objectives for this course include acquisition of tools to conduct original research, engagement in scholarly discussions, and exposure to critical analysis.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and in-class participation:
Regular attendance and active participation in the weekly seminar will be a critical factor affecting your grade for this semester. Students will be expected to have read all the assigned readings beforehand and be prepared to lead discussions and present assigned materials.

Discussant Paper:
Each student will participate in writing one jointly co-authored discussion paper summarizing and critiquing the research paper/article to be presented by one of our guest speakers. The discussant sets the stage for the discussion that follows the presentation of a paper, and your comments should be based on a careful and thoughtful reading of the paper. Each discussion paper should be 2-4 typed pages.

As a discussant, you are both helping the audience to understand the contributions of a paper, and its strengths and weaknesses, as well as providing input to the author through constructive criticism. Hence, a discussant’s report is both a summary and an evaluation of the paper/article being discussed. You should briefly summarize the paper’s main contribution and contextualize the paper by discussing how it fits in the relevant literature. You should then evaluate the paper’s methodology and whether it successfully proves the case it is making (are there any mistakes, some parts of the argument are not convincing, etc.). You can critique the paper’s organization offering valuable help to the author in terms of a more clear and precise presentation of her argument.

Summary of Articles:
As you refine your research questions and methodology, it will be necessary to become familiar with the related academic literature. A review of the related literature, which will constitute an important portion of your final thesis, serves two purposes. It must acquaint the reader with the landscape of existing work, and motivate the contribution that your paper makes to it. By September 22, you will have to identify a research question, and hand in a summary of three closely related journal articles. The summary of each article should be one half to one page in length. Discuss both the contributions of the paper, and its relevance to your research question.

Summary Questions for Guest Speaker Papers:
Three guest speakers, Raphael Frank, Maia Linask, and Prakarsh Singh will be visiting to give talks on their research. The relevant papers will be distributed two weeks prior to each talk, along with a series of questions addressing the paper’s purpose, methodology and findings. The following week, you will turn in answers to these questions. These summaries should be one to two pages in length, and are due on September 8, October 20 and November 10.

Thesis Proposal:
By the end of the fall semester, you will be required to develop a preliminary draft of the first three sections that will form the basis for your senior thesis. The three sections should be modeled as The Introduction, Literature Review, and Model/Methodology. This draft must include a brief introduction stating your main research question and its significance (why do/should we care?), a literature review of existing work in the area and how your research project would add to this body of work (how does it differ?), and a model/methodology outlining how you would proceed to answer your research question. The planned research can be empirical or theoretical or, ideally, both. If it includes empirical work, you should name the specific data set that you plan to use (though you may not have it in your possession yet). This preliminary draft of the thesis should be approximately 10-15 type-written pages. This draft will be due no later than noon on Friday, Dec. 19, 2014.

Discussant of a Peer’s Proposal
Peer feedback can be extremely valuable during the senior thesis process. Each student will be assigned to critique the research proposal of a peer, writing a discussant’s paper and giving oral comments at the presentation. Each student should prepare a rough draft of their thesis proposal, and give it to their peer reviewer by 5pm on Friday, November 28. Discussant papers will be due on the date of the of peer’s thesis proposal presentation.

Grading:

Attendance and seminar participation = 20% of the total grade

1 Discussant Paper = 10% of the total grade

Summary of articles (on student’s research topic ) = 15%

Summary questions of 3 guest speaker papers = 15%

Discussant of a Peer’s Proposal = 10%

Thesis Proposal = 30% of the total grade
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Outline</th>
<th>Work Due</th>
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| Sept. 4 (Wed) | • Introductions, syllabus, schedule, grading  
• Norm Medeiros: Introduction to library/data digital bibliographic resources  
• Distribute Raphael Franck’s paper, summary questions |                                                |
| Sept. 8 | • Break into 3 groups, discuss Raphael Franck’s paper  
• Discuss Student research ideas | • Summary questions for Raphael Franck’s paper |
| Sept. 15 | • Raphael Franck’s talk (6-7:30pm)  
• Dinner | • Discussant paper for Raphael Franck  
• Summary of 3 Articles (Fri 9/19) |
| Sept. 22 | • TBA  
• Distribute Suresh Naidu’s paper |                                                |
| Sept. 29 | • STATA workshop  
• Break into 3 groups: discuss Prakarsh Singh’s paper | • Summary questions for Prakarsh Singh’s paper. |
| Oct. 6 | • Prakarsh Singh talk (6-7:30pm)  
• Dinner  
• Distribute Maia Linask’s paper, summary questions. | • Discussant paper for Prakarsh Singh. |
| Oct. 13 | **FALL BREAK: NO MEETING** |                                                |
| Oct. 20 | • Break into 3 Groups, discuss Maia Linask’s paper  
• TBA | • Summary questions for Maia Linask’s paper |
| Oct. 27 | • Maia Linask’s talk (6-7:30pm)  
• Dinner | • Discussant paper for Maia Linask |
| Nov. 3 | • TBA |                                                |
| Nov. 10 | • Break into 3 groups: Student presentations of thesis progress |                                                |
| Nov. 17 | • Data Workshop: Richard Ball (documentation of empirics), Norm Medeiros (Data sources), working with data more generally | • Draft of thesis proposal due 11/28, at 5pm. |
| Nov. 24 | • TBA |                                                |
| Dec. 1 | • Student Presentations of Thesis Proposals (6-10pm)  
• Critique/Discussion by assigned peers | • Thesis proposal due Friday, 12/19 at noon. |
| Dec. 8 | • Student Presentations of Thesis Proposals (6-10pm)  
• Critique/Discussion by assigned peers |                                                |