

Brandeis University

Department of Economics

April 2007 Newsletter for Majors and Minors

Now that most midterm exams are past and finals are just a few weeks ahead, it's time for sophomores and juniors to plan for the fall semester. See information below about three new courses to be offered in fall 2007.

Fall pre-registration

Pre-registration begins Wednesday April 11. A list of all fall Economics classes with links to preliminary syllabi for some courses is posted on the Econ website:

http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/economics/undergrad_courses073html.html.

Students who have questions should contact Professor Coiner (coiner@brandeis.edu) or Nicole Haefner (nhaefner@brandeis.edu), our new Academic Administrator for Economics.

New fall courses

Majors and minors will find three new courses offered for fall '07. All are lower-level electives (prerequisite ECON 2a only):

ECON 30a, "The Economy of China." Prof. Gary Jefferson, one of the country's top experts on China's economy, will teach this course. He is currently continuing his research on the productivity of Chinese enterprises while on sabbatical in China.

ECON 55a, "American Economic History from Colonial Times to the 1960s." This course, a special one-time offering, will examine the sources of American economic growth over 300+ years. The course will be taught by Prof. Andrew Seltzer. Prof. Seltzer, an economic historian on the faculty of Royal Holloway College, University of London, will be visiting Brandeis for the 2007-8 academic year.

ECON 142a, "Research Seminar on the Economics of Higher Education." This seminar, taught by Dean Adam Jaffe, will use economic tools to analyze issues related to the organization of modern universities and the markets in which they operate. The course is intended to give students experience in designing and executing their own original research project, possibly as preparation for undertaking a senior honors thesis. *Please note that this course is a lower-level elective.*

New faculty

In addition to Prof. Seltzer and Dean Jaffe (see above), students will find two new faces among faculty teaching fall Econ courses. Industrial Organization (ECON 135a) will be taught by Associate Prof. Kathryn Graddy, who is joining the Brandeis faculty this summer. Prof. Graddy's field is empirical industrial organization, and much of her recent work

focuses on the market for art. She is currently a professor at Oxford University. Financial Economics (ECON 171a) will be taught by Rimma Yusim, a Ph.D. candidate in IBS. Ms. Yusim will also be teaching Econ 82b during the summer.

Reminder: Math requirement for Econ 80a and Econ 82b

Students enrolling in the intermediate micro or intermediate macro courses must have demonstrated basic proficiency in calculus. Every student planning to enroll in Econ 80a or Econ 82b must satisfy this requirement in one of three ways: a) completing Math 10a with a grade of C- or better; b) scoring at least 4 on the AP Mathematics AB test, or at least 3 on the AP Mathematics BC test; or c) passing a placement exam administered by the Economics Department at the beginning of each semester. A knowledge of calculus is important for success these courses and most upper level electives. If it has been a while since you completed your last math course, some review may be helpful.

Econometrics

Beginning with the class of 2006 (last year's graduating class), students wishing to graduate with honors in Economics are required to take Econ 184b (Econometrics). **To help Econometrics fit into everyone's schedule, we will offer Econ 184 in both the fall and the spring semesters.** The requirement can also be satisfied with Econ 185a, an introductory econometrics class intended for students with knowledge of linear algebra. Econ 185a will be offered in spring '07.

Beginning with students entering Brandeis in fall 2006, Econometrics (Econ 184, Econ 185, or Econ 215) is required for **all** Economics majors. We have adopted this requirement for two reasons. First, econometrics provides a bridge between the economic theory that students see in their courses and economics in the real world. By learning econometrics, students gain skills needed to evaluate competing analytical approaches that are used to analyze market behavior and the functioning of economic systems. A second and very practical reason is that graduate programs and **potential employers increasingly expect students to have a working knowledge of econometrics.** Many seniors report that they were asked about econometrics courses, and even asked econometrics questions, during job interviews.

Although the new requirement applies only to students who entered Brandeis in fall 2006 or thereafter, we encourage all majors to take the course. (More than half of our current senior majors have taken econometrics.)

Senior honors thesis

Juniors planning to write a senior thesis should begin the process now by discussing potential topics with faculty members or with Prof. Carter, who supervises the thesis-writing process and helps to match students with appropriate faculty advisors. Sometimes a term paper for a course is the first step in a successful research project. Students who identify their topic early can use the summer to read background material or collect data.

Advising

Prof. Coiner, the Undergraduate Advising Head, has prepared a detailed memo that answers many of the basic questions students may have about their academic program (<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/economics/files/advising%20memo%20web%208-16-06.pdf>). This memo can also be accessed from the Economics Department website (click on "Advice for Students"). Please take time to read it before meeting with your advisor or Prof. Coiner.

New UDRs for 2007-8

Next year's UDRs are rising seniors Nikhil Agarwal, Zach Seeskin, and Rona Peltzer. One of their first tasks for the fall semester will be to organize our second annual "Life after Brandeis" event, featuring recent Econ graduates. Last fall nine alumni now working or attending graduate school in the Boston area shared their experiences and provided advice about course selection, internships, job interviews and grad school. If you are graduating this year and would like to share your experience with Econ majors, please make sure that we know how to reach you! Nicole will be collecting post-Brandeis address information from graduating seniors.

We extend our thanks to our 2006-7 UDRs, Jacques Alcabes '07, Olga Shapiro '07, and Matt Niedzwiecki '07, for their efforts this year.

Rachel McCulloch
Chair