

Brandeis University

Department of Economics

April 2008 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.

Fall pre-registration

Pre-registration for fall 2008 courses begins Tuesday, April 8th. A list of all fall Economics classes is posted on the Econ website:

http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/economics/undergrad_courses083html.html.

Students who have questions should contact Professor Coiner (coiner@brandeis.edu) or Nicole Haefner (haefner@brandeis.edu), our Academic Administrator for Economics. For information about textbooks for specific fall courses, please contact the instructor directly.

New faculty

Students will find three new faces among faculty teaching fall Econ courses:

Statistics for Economic Analysis (Econ 83a, sections 1 and 2) will be taught by Dr. Scott Redenius, who is joining the Brandeis faculty this summer as Senior Lecturer in Economics. Dr. Redenius is a graduate of Oberlin College and earned his Ph.D. at Yale University. He is currently a faculty member at Bryn Mawr College. Dr. Redenius's research focuses on the development of U.S. financial institutions prior to the founding of the Federal Reserve System.

Macroeconomic Theory (Econ 82b, sections 1 and 2) will be taught by Daniel Tortorice. Mr. Tortorice is a graduate of MIT and will receive his Ph.D. from Harvard University in June. His doctoral dissertation focuses on unemployment and expectations in macroeconomic models.

Financial Economics, (Econ 171a) will be taught by Yan (Heidi) Zhao, a Ph.D. candidate in the Brandeis International Business School. Ms. Yan is a graduate of Peking University in China and holds a master's degree from Nottingham University in England. While studying at Brandeis, she has worked as a financial analyst at State Street Global Advisors in Boston. Her research has included work on earnings surprises and international portfolio diversification.

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. 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 over the summer may be helpful.

Econometrics

Beginning with the class of 2006, 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 184b in both the fall and the spring semesters.** The requirement can also be satisfied with Econ 185a, an introductory econometrics course intended for students with knowledge of linear algebra, or Econ 215a, an introductory econometrics for Ph.D. students. Econ 215a will be offered in spring '09, and Econ 185a will be offered in 2009-2010.

Beginning with students entering Brandeis in fall 2006, Econometrics (Econ 184b, Econ 185a, or Econ 215a) is required for **all** Economics majors. We have adopted this requirement for two reasons. First, econometrics provides a bridge between the economic theory students see in their courses and economics in the real world. By learning econometrics, students gain the skills needed to evaluate competing analytical approaches used to explain market behavior and the functioning of economic systems. A second and very practical reason for studying econometrics is that **graduate programs and potential employers increasingly expect Econ graduates 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.) Please note that Econ 184b has Econ 83a, Econ 80a, and Econ 82b as prerequisites. In some cases, the instructor may allow a student to enroll in Econ 184b after completing Econ 80a **or** Econ 82b and taking the other concurrently. Students choosing to do this may have to learn some intermediate micro or macro material on their own in order to succeed in Econ 184b. All students must have completed Econ 83a or an equivalent statistics course prior to enrolling in Econ 184b.

Senior honors

To graduate with honors in Economics, a student must maintain a GPA of at least 3.5 in courses in the major, complete a course in econometrics, and write a senior thesis. Juniors planning to write a thesis are advised to begin the process this term 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. This year many Econ faculty members have suggested potential senior thesis research topics. Students who identify their topic early can use the summer to read background material or collect data. For more information about the senior honors program, go to <http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/economics/senior%20thesis.html> or access the information from the Economics Department website (click on Senior Honors Program).

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/advisingmemo-websiteversion%207-31-07.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 2008-09

Next year's UDRs are Elizabeth Setren '10, Jonathan Freed '09, and Mohit Gourisaria '09. One of their first tasks for the fall semester will be to organize our third 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 2007-08 UDRs, Nikhil Agarwal '08, Zach Seeskin '08, and Rona Peltzer '08, for their outstanding efforts this year.

Rachel McCulloch
Chair