HONORS THESIS MEMO

To: Economics Majors who are Seniors in the 2016-2017 Academic Year
From: Nidhiya Menon, Senior Honors Thesis Coordinator, Department of Economics
Subject: Procedures for Organizing, Preparing, and Defending the Senior Honors Thesis
Date: August 1, 2016

As the new academic year approaches, I am distributing this memo to inform those of you that are interested in writing a senior honors thesis of the requirements and procedures of the program. Please read through this document.

I. Application Process and Enrollment

1. Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the Economics major and have completed Econ 184b or its equivalent to apply for admissions to the honors thesis program.

2. Students who wish to write a thesis must enroll in Econ 99a for the fall semester. Permission to continue with Econ 99b in the spring is conditional on making satisfactory progress (see II (1), below) in the fall. Each Econ 99 course carries four credits; these do not count towards the major.

3. To apply for admission to Econ 99a, a student must submit a one page thesis proposal. The thesis proposal should clearly state (i) the research question that the honors thesis will attempt to answer, and (ii) the method(s) and data the student intends to use to analyze the question. It is strongly recommended that the student discuss his/her thesis proposal in advance with a faculty member who is knowledgeable in the relevant field. The one page proposal is due by 5:00 pm on August 31st, 2016. There will no exceptions to this deadline. Students who do not meet this deadline will not be allowed to register in Econ 99a and will forfeit their chance of writing a senior honors thesis. Proposals should be sent to me at menon@brandeis.edu and to Leslie Yancich (lesley@brandeis.edu) with the subject heading HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL.

4. After reviewing the proposals, I will compile a list of student names and topics for circulation among the faculty. Faculty are requested to respond with their first, second, and third choices regarding the topics they would like to advise. If, in the process of preparing your thesis proposal you have consulted with one or more members of the faculty, please identify them in your proposal.

5. The Economics Department faculty will determine which thesis proposals are accepted into the program. As not all proposals are accepted, students should sign up for an additional course in case they are not able to enroll in Econ 99a. If your proposal is accepted, you must go to Leslie Yancich and pick up an add-form for Econ 99a. It is
your responsibility to take the Add form to the Registrar’s office and to enroll in the course before September 8, 2016, the last day to add classes.

6. Each potential thesis writer will be assigned two faculty advisors – a primary one that he/she consults regularly, and a secondary one that he/she also consults, but less frequently. The purpose of having 2 faculty advisors is to avoid potential mismatches at the defense stage of the thesis for which the student needs a second reader from Econ/IBS. The aim is to complete the primary and secondary advisor assignments by September 7, 2016.

7. Although students may consult with faculty beforehand and request to work with particular faculty members, in the interest of matching students with faculty whose research interest best align with the proposed topics and in the interest of distributing the burden of advising equitably, students should know that they may not always get their first choice of advisors.

II. Guidelines and Resources During the Thesis Process

1. The presentation date for the Fall semester is Tuesday, December 6th. This meeting will bring together groups of 3 or 4 students and their primary and secondary advisors and honors thesis writers will formally present their completed work and research results obtained thus far. A written report that forms the background for the presentation is due at this time. In addition to the work completed and a summary of the results, this written report must contain a detailed view of the literature relevant to the student’s research. This draft must be submitted by 5:00 pm on December 5th, 2016 to the primary and secondary advisors, as well as to Leslie Yancich. On the basis of this presentation, the Economics Department will meet to judge whether the thesis is viable and whether the student should be allowed to enroll in Econ 99b for the spring 2017 semester. Projects that are not viable will be terminated at this stage; those students who are not allowed to progress may convert their first semester work to an independent study (in consultation with the primary advisor). The student will receive independent study credit for Econ 99a for the fall semester upon submission of a research paper.

2. As with any class, Econ 99a can be dropped. The last day to drop without a W is October 11, 2016 and the last day to drop with a W is November 10, 2016.

3. Students should plan to meet at least once every two weeks with their primary advisor and at least once a month with their secondary advisor.

4. The Economics Department has arranged for an Economics PhD student (Kathleen McQueeney) to serve as a TA for Econ 99a. The TA will be available during regular office hours (TBA) to provide assistance with Stata and econometrics questions.
5. An Econ 99 website on Latte provides links for help with Stats and econometrics questions.

6. The first draft of the thesis is due on March 24, 2017. It must be submitted to both advisors and electronically to Leslie Yancich. Students should use the remaining weeks of the spring semester to incorporate the comments from their primary and secondary advisors; complete additional work; and edit their paper, as required.

III. Thesis Completion and Defense

1. Before the defense version of the thesis is submitted (see III (4), below), students should consult with their primary advisors to find a third member outside of Econ/IBS for his/her committee. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the third committee member and confirm their willingness to act as a third reader. The third reader should be confirmed, and his/her name submitted to Leslie Yancich, no later than March 31st, 2017. In consultation with committee members and Leslie Yancich, the student must schedule a time for the thesis defense meeting during the final exam period.

2. The student is responsible for delivering copies of the thesis to the committee members in time for the defense meeting.

3. The student is responsible for making five bound copies of the final copy of their thesis, and a sixth copy for the library which is to be unbound. At the time of submission to the Economics Department, the student should ensure that he/she signs a release form giving the library permission to add the thesis to their collections. This form should be submitted to Leslie Yancich, along with one bound and one unbound copy of the thesis. One bound copy is submitted to each committee member; the final copy is for the student.

4. The defense draft (the version of the thesis that the student will defend before the three-person committee) is due on April 20, 2017. This draft must be submitted to both advisors and electronically to Leslie Yancich. The final version of the thesis that incorporates all comments and corrections raised by committee members during the defense is due at the end of the final exam period (May 11, 2017). This final version of the thesis is to be submitted to the Economics Department (see I (3), above).

5. The defense draft of the thesis, which is due April 20, 2017, must be approved in advance by both the primary and secondary advisors before the defense is scheduled.

My role: As the Senior Honors Thesis Coordinator, I will handle all of the paperwork (signatures on forms) and be the general “point” person for questions regarding procedures and requirements. For questions on econometric issues, see the Econ 99a TA or your primary or secondary advisor.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>One page thesis proposal due</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Last day to drop Econ 99 without a W</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Last day to drop Econ 99 with a W</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Part I of draft due</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Presentation of literature review and preliminary results</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>First draft of thesis due</td>
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<td>March</td>
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<td>Third reader identified and confirmed</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Thesis defense draft due</td>
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<td>Early May</td>
<td>after end of classes</td>
<td>Thesis defense before three-person defense committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Final version submitted to the library and the Economics Dept.</td>
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