Brandeis University
Department of Economics

January 2011 Newsletter for Majors and Minors

Sorry for the delay in getting this out. The Economics Department faculty and staff welcome you back to Brandeis for the new semester. It is hard to imagine that we have formally begun the “Spring Semester” – this year a serious misnomer indeed!

New faculty

Students will find some new faces among faculty teaching spring Econ courses.

*Macroeconomic Theory* (Econ 82b section 1 & 2) is being taught by Raphael Schoenle, Assistant Professor of Economics. Having completed his Ph.D. at Princeton this past spring, Professor Schoenle, studies how firm-level behavior, in particular price-setting behavior, interacts with macroeconomic activity and public policy.

*Experimental Economics* (Econ 155a), a new course, is taught by Peter DeScioli, who is in the first year of a two-year Florence Levy Kay Postdoctoral Fellowship with a joint appointment in economics and psychology. Professor DeScioli’s work includes experimental economics in which he studies how the human mind uses principles of strategy to solve problems in the social world. His current work looks at the processes by which people establish and secure ownership and property rights.

*Microeconomic Theory* (ECON 80a section 1 & 2) is being offered by Nabeela Alam, *Statistics for Economic Analysis* (Econ 83a 1 & 2) is taught by Le (Sarah) Tang, and *Financial Economics* (Econ 171a) is offered by Manjola Tase. All three are completing their PhDs in the International Business School at Brandeis.

Econometrics requirement for Econ majors

Econometrics is a required course for all majors who entered Brandeis in fall 2006 or later. Students can satisfy this requirement by taking Econ 184b or, for those with good math skills, Econ 185a, which requires knowledge of linear algebra. We offer Econ 184b each semester. Econ 185a is offered in alternate years. Econ 185a will next be offered in the spring of 2012. This spring, students with strong backgrounds in math and statistics, who may wish to take a course in advanced econometrics can check out Econ 311a, the first-year econometrics course in the PhD program.

In a year when job search may be especially challenging, seniors who have not already taken econometrics should bear in mind that many employers value candidates with advanced number-crunching skills.
Math requirement for Econ 80a, Econ 82b, and Econ 83a

Students enrolling in the intermediate theory courses must have demonstrated basic proficiency in calculus. Every student planning to enroll in these courses 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.

Advising

Prof. Coiner and Prof. Redenius, the Undergraduate Advising Head, have prepared a detailed memo that answers many of the basic questions students may have about their academic program. 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. Redenius.

Undergraduate Departmental Representatives (UDRs)

Our UDRs have pictures and bios up on our website. If you don’t know the UDRs and their function, you can learn more by following this link.

Department activities

For the spring, the UDRs are planning to hold a Bloomberg training event and an information session for juniors about the Senior Honors Program. Keep a look out for upcoming information about dates and locations.

Finally…

We hope this will be a productive, satisfying, and enjoyable semester for all our students. We especially urge senior majors to take full advantage of the spring course offerings in the Economics Department.

Gary Jefferson
Chair