HONORS THESIS MEMO

To: Economics Majors who are seniors in the 2018-2019 Academic Year

From: George Hall & Gary Jefferson, Senior Honors Thesis Coordinators, Department of Economics

Subject: Procedures for Organizing, Preparing, and Defending the Senior Honors Thesis

Date: April 17th, 2018

As the new academic year approaches, we are 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 Wednesday, September 7th, 2018, and students will be notified of their acceptance into the program no later than Tuesday, September 12th. There will be 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 ghall@brandeis.edu and to Leslie Yancich (lesliy@brandeis.edu) with the subject heading HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL.

4. After reviewing the proposals, we 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, it is your responsibility to contact Leslie Yanchich and get a code to enroll in ECON 99a before the course enrollment deadline of September 14th.**

6. Each potential thesis writer will be assigned two faculty advisers – 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 advisers 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 adviser assignments by September 17th, 2018.

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 interests 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 advisers.

8. Anne Carter research funds are available. These must be approved by program coordinators.

## II. Guidelines and Resources During the Thesis Process

1. The fall semester of the program will entail two meetings. The first meeting, which will be scheduled for late October, will be an opportunity for students to get together with other honors thesis writers, exchange information on where to locate research resources, and so on. (Depending upon the number of students enrolled in the honors program, we will determine whether or not we will be able to incorporate peer editing into the thesis process. This will be discussed at a later date.) The second meeting, scheduled for Monday, December 10th, will occur in groups of 3 or 4 students and their primary and secondary advisers. At the December meeting, honors thesis writers will formally present work completed 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 review of the literature relevant to the student’s research. This draft must be submitted by December 10th to the primary and secondary advisers, as well as to Leslie Yanchich. At the start of the spring semester, 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 2019 semester. Projects that are not viable will be terminated at this stage; students may also choose to stop writing the thesis at this stage. If this course of action is chosen, the student (in consultation with the primary adviser) completes and submits a research paper and receives independent study credit for Econ 99a for the fall semester.

2. As with any class, Econ 99a can be dropped. The last day to drop without a W is October 17, 2018 and the last day to drop with a W is November 14, 2018.
3. Students should plan to meet at least once every two weeks with their primary adviser and at least once a month with their secondary adviser.

4. The Economics Department has arranged for Economics PhD student, Suzanne Steele, 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 22nd, 2019. It must be submitted electronically to jefferso@brandeis.edu, both advisers and Leslie Yancich. Students should use the remaining weeks of the spring semester to incorporate the comments from their primary and secondary advisers; 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 advisers 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 April 5th, 2019. 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 19th, 2019. This draft must be submitted to both advisers 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 14th, 2019). This final version of the thesis is to be submitted to the Economics Department (see I (3), above).

5. The advisers need to approve the scheduling of the thesis defense. Leslie Yancich will coordinate the date, time and place with students once this is done.
6. Our role: As the Senior Honors Thesis Coordinators, we will handle all of the paperwork (signatures on forms) and be the general “point” person(s) for questions regarding procedures and requirements. For questions on econometric issues, see the Econ 99a TA or your primary or secondary adviser.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>One page thesis proposal due</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Last day to drop Econ 99 without a W</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Last day to drop Econ 99 with a W</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Part I of draft due/Presentation of preliminary results</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>First draft of thesis due</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Third reader identified and confirmed</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Thesis defense draft due</td>
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<td>End of April/Early May (after end of classes)</td>
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<td>Thesis defense before three-person defense committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Final version submitted to the library and the Economics Dept.</td>
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