

HONORS THESIS MEMO

To: Economics Majors who are Seniors in the 2017-2018 Academic Year
From: Linda Bui, Senior Honors Thesis Coordinator, Department of Economics
Subject: Procedures for Organizing, Preparing, and Defending the Senior Honors Thesis
Date: March 21, 2017

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 Wednesday, September 6th, 2017, 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 me at ebrainer@brandeis.edu and to Leslie Yancich (lesliey@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, it is your responsibility to contact Leslie Yancich and get a code to enroll in ECON 99a before the course enrollment deadline of September 13th.**

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 15, 2017.
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 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, I will determine whether or not I 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 11th, will occur in groups of 3 or 4 students and their primary and secondary advisors. 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 11th to the primary and secondary advisors, as well as to Leslie Yancich. 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 2018 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 advisor) 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, 2017 and the last day to drop with a W is November 14, 2017.

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 (Carolina Pan) 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 23rd, 2018. 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 April 6th, 2018. 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, 2018. 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 8, 2018). 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, 2018, 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.

IMPORTANT DATES:

September	6	One page thesis proposal due
October	17	Last day to drop Econ 99 without a W
November	14	Last day to drop Econ 99 with a W
December	11	Part I of draft due/Presentation of preliminary results
March	23	First draft of thesis due
April	6	Third reader identified and confirmed
April	20	Thesis defense draft due
End of April/Early May (after end of classes)		Thesis defense before three-person defense committee
May	8	Final version submitted to the library and the Economics Dept.