

HONORS THESIS MEMO

To: Economic Majors Undertaking Senior Thesis Projects, during the 2023-2024 Academic Year

From: **Ben Shiller**, Senior Honors Thesis Coordinator, Department of Economics

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

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This document sets out the guidelines and critical dates for undertaking and completing your senior thesis project. Please read and review this document carefully.

IMPORTANT DATES (for SPRING '24 graduates):

September	6	One page thesis proposal due
September	13	Notification of acceptance
September	14	Deadline for registering for ECON99a*
November	TBD	Last day to drop Econ 99
December	7-8	Part I of draft due/Presentation of preliminary results
March	22	First draft of thesis due
April	5	Third reader identified and confirmed
April	24	Thesis defense draft due
May	TBD /study days	Thesis defense before three-person defense committee
May	15	Final version submitted to the Library and the Econ. Dept.

IMPORTANT DATES (for FALL '24 graduates):

January	17	One page thesis proposal due
January	22	Notification of acceptance
January	24	Deadline for registering for ECON99a*

March	27	Last day to drop thesis
May	1-2	Part I of draft due/Presentation of preliminary results
November	8	First draft of thesis due
November	22	Third reader identified and confirmed
December	4	Thesis defense draft due
December	11/study day	Thesis defense before three-person defense committee
December	16	Final version submitted to the Library and the Econ. Dept.

I. Application Process and Enrollment

1. At the time of application for the senior honors thesis program, students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the Economics Major and have completed Econ 184b or its equivalent with a grade of B+ or higher. The GPA calculation includes all economics courses that relate to the requirements for the economics major, including Brandeis cross-listed courses and summer courses taken at Brandeis or in Copenhagen.
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 meeting the minimum requirements of 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. *To the extent possible, the student should 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, 2023, and students will be notified of their acceptance into the program no later than Wednesday, September 13th. 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 shiller@brandeis.edu and to Leslie Yancich (lesliey@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 will be 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 to get enrolled in ECON 99a on or before **September 14th**, the last day to add classes.
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 13th, 2023.
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.

II. Guidelines, Meetings, and Resources During the Thesis Process

1. **The fall semester of the program will include two meetings. The first meeting, to be scheduled for late October, will be an opportunity for students to get together with other honors thesis writers, learn about their thesis topics, exchange information on where to locate research resources, and so on. The second meeting, scheduled for December 7-8th, will occur in groups of 3 or 4 students with 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. Prior to or at the time of the December meeting, this hard copies of this draft must be provided to the primary and secondary advisers, 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 2024 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) will complete and submit a research paper and thereby receive independent study credit for Econ 98a for the fall semester (pending approval from the Registrar).

2. As with any class, Econ 99a can be dropped. See the academic calendar for **2023**.
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 will arrange for a TA for Econ 99a if there is sufficient demand. If so The TA will be available to provide assistance with Stata and econometrics questions.
5. **Anne Carter research funds are available for data, travel, and other eligible expenses. Applications for these applications must be approved by program coordinators. We encourage students to utilize these funds.**
6. **An Econ 99 website on Latte provides links for help with Stats and econometrics questions.**
7. The first draft of the thesis is due on March 22nd, 2024. It must be submitted electronically to both advisers, shillerbrandeis.edu, and lesliey@brandeis.edu. 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 7th. 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 – both hard copies and electronic copies – of the thesis to the three committee members at least five (5) full days before the defense meeting. The defense presentations will be scheduled for **TBD/Study days**. An electronic copy shall also be sent electronically to Leslie Yancich.

3. The final version of the thesis that incorporates comments and corrections raised by committee members during the defense is due at the end of the final exam period (May 15th, 2024). This final version of the thesis, satisfactory to the defense committee, is to be submitted to the Economics Department (see I (3), above).
4. The student is responsible for making four bound copies (copy center) of the final copy of their thesis, and a fifth copy for the library which is to be submitted online through a library release form. This form will give the library permission to add the thesis to their collections. This form should also be submitted to Leslie Yancich. Of the four bound copies, one is for the economics department and the remaining three are for each of your advisers. These are due by May 15th, 2024.
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. As the Senior Honors Thesis Coordinators, I will be the person who facilitates coordination with the procedures, including the dates described herein. For questions on econometric issues, see the Econ 99a TA or your primary or secondary adviser.