

Economics 191A-B: Senior Essay Seminar
Fall 2007 – Winter 2008, Joel Watson

This course shows students how to engage in original research (formulate an interesting question and answer it), to critically assess the work of others, and to present ideas. Building from the foundation of the core and elective courses, the students will formulate and discuss economic ideas, review the literature, make formal presentations, and write an original paper.

Instructional activities during the Fall quarter:

- Week 0: Introduction and discussion of proposals
- Week 1: Comments from Dr. Famulari on research methods and papers from last year's class; examples of research topics and papers
- Week 2: Discussion of ideas, exercise in narrowing the scope
- Week 3: (9/16) Session with Adele Barsh, Economics Librarian
- Weeks 4-5: Reading-group-style presentations
- Week 6: Revised/new proposals
- Weeks 7: Informal assessments and focusing of ideas
- Weeks 8-9: Presentations and feedback
- Week 10: Submission of extensive outlines
(title, introduction describing a question and proposal of how to answer it, literature review, economic model, research plan for following quarter)

Each student will also make a connection with a Economics Department professor whose research is close to the student's interest.

Notes on methods and resources:

Ask a question and think about why the answer is important. Don't be too broad. Learn about others who have asked similar questions and the approach they took to finding answers. Use resources such as JSTOR, NBER, Econlit, Google Scholar search, Google with qualifiers "site:.edu" or "site:.gov". Decide what can be added to the literature and what a specific method of analyses allows one to conclude.

The Department of Economics at Princeton University requires all their undergraduate majors write a senior thesis and they have an outstanding and extensive website regarding the writing of a senior thesis. Explore "Senior Thesis: Class of 2008 at <http://www.econ.princeton.edu/undergrad/index.html>.

An all around useful web site: Bill Goffe, Resources for Economists on the Internet, at <http://rfe.org/>