

**Economics 191AB: Senior Essay Seminar  
Winter and Spring Quarters, 2004**

**Vincent P. Crawford, Economics 319  
[vcrawfor@weber.ucsd.edu](mailto:vcrawfor@weber.ucsd.edu), 534-3452**

Economics 191A is Part I of the Department's Senior Essay Seminar. Part II, 191B, is given in Spring Quarter. These courses are required for Economics or Management Science majors who wish to graduate with the "highest distinction" honors designation on their diploma. Both 191A and 191B must be taken to receive departmental honors. They are normally limited to students with a GPA of 3.5 or better in upper division Economics and Management Science courses.

The only formal requirement of Economics 191AB is to complete a well-researched 25-30 page essay on an economics topic (approved by the instructor), by a deadline near the end of Spring Quarter. But to satisfactorily complete 191A a first draft of the essay must be turned in near the end of Winter quarter. Often, the first draft contains the essay's theoretical analysis and a preliminary description of its empirical content; but other arrangements are possible, depending on the topic.

Your work for Economics 191A can be divided into three parts:

- (1) selecting your topic, finding sufficient reference and source material, and writing a short description of your topic, including at least three references
- (2) formulating an outline
- (3) writing a first draft of your essay

Your work for Economics 191B can also be divided into three parts:

- (1) formulating a plan for completing your essay
- (2) writing and presenting a first draft of your completed essay
- (3) writing a final draft of your completed essay

At the end of each part of Economics 191A or 191B, you will turn in your work product to date. Please provide both an electronic version (preferably .pdf or .txt) and a hard copy in my mailbox. You should think of 191A's goal not necessarily as completing a rough draft of your full essay, but of making enough progress to write up at least half of it. You are encouraged to give me drafts for comment and ask me questions throughout the quarters, and to come to see me as often as you find it helpful. My office hours both Winter and Spring quarters are W 2:00-3:00 or by appointment.

Economics 191A will meet periodically, as indicated, with times selected from TTh 11:00-12:20 in Sequoyah 244. The tentative schedule (with the February 24 and 26 meetings depending on your needs and wishes) is:

Tuesday, January 6: Class meeting, introduction to choosing an essay topic, finding references, and research strategies; signups for your presentations on January 27, 29 and February 24, 26  
Tuesday, January 20 (no meeting): Turn in a two-page description of your topic with at least three references by 4 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday, January 27 and 29: Class meetings, short presentations and discussions of your topics

Tuesday, February 3 (no meeting): Turn in an outline of your essay by 4 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday, February 24 and 26: Possible class meetings, presentations of first drafts

Friday, March 12 (last day of Winter Quarter classes): Turn in the first draft of your essay by 4 p.m.

Economics 191B will meet only occasionally in Spring Quarter, with times selected from TTh 11:00-12:20 in Sequoyah 244. The tentative schedule (with May 18, 20 meetings depending on your needs and wishes) is:

Tuesday, March 30: Class meeting, getting started on the rest of your essay

Tuesday, April 13 (no meeting): Turn in two-page description of plan for completion by 4 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday, May 18 and 20: Possible class meetings, presentations of your first drafts

Friday, June 4 (last day of Spring Quarter classes): Turn in final draft of your essay by 4 p.m.

### **How to Find a Topic**

At the start the main problem is deciding on your topic: something original, not too small or irrelevant, but not too big and complicated. Even more important is that the topic should be something that genuinely interests you, because otherwise you will be very tired of it by the time you write your final draft! A good topic project often has two parts, the first theory and the second empirical. Areas of research can be found in the leading general economics journals and specialty journals, and in publications of the regional Federal Reserve Banks, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Brookings Institution, environmental organizations such as Resources for the Future, and so on. A simple, possible strategy is to take a good paper published six to ten years ago in a good journal and ask how well the results hold up now; or to find a good paper based on one country or data set, and extend it to another country or data set.

### **Readings**

The following books (on reserve in Geisel Library unless noted) may help suggest topics:

Jacqueline Brux and Janna Cowen, *Economic Issues and Policy, 2nd edition*, Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Pub., 2002

*Economics* (periodical: in Geisel stacks at HC 101 A635), Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1999-2000.

Edwin Dolan and John Goodman, *Economics of Public Policy: The Micro View*, St. Paul, MN: West Pub. Co., 1982

Thomas Swartz and Frank Bonello, editors, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Economic Issues*, Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 2000

Steven E. Landsburg, *The Armchair Economist: Economics & Everyday Life*, New York: Free Press, 1993

Paul Krugman, *The Age of Diminished Expectations*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: MA, MIT Press, 1997

Joseph Stiglitz's and George Akerlof's Nobel lectures (both in the June 2002 *American Economic Review* are helpful (and inspirational) on how to turn observations about the world into economics.

### **Computing and information sources**

To facilitate communication and gain access to many useful resources, you must get a personal computer account from Academic Computing Services (<http://www-ac.s.ucsd.edu>). If you have any questions, Kimberley Newmark ([knewmark@ucsd.edu](mailto:knewmark@ucsd.edu)) should be able to help you. This will give you access to the Social Science Database and many useful internet sites, including those linked on the course web site, which you can reach through <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~vcrawfor>. See also the very useful links at Harold Colson's (the Economics Librarian at Geisel Library) page, at <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~hcolson/econbib.html>.