

Prof. Ross Starr  
[rstarr@ucsd.edu](mailto:rstarr@ucsd.edu)  
858-534-3879

**191A-B: Senior Essay Seminar, Fall 2011-Winter 2012**  
(based on an outline by Dr. Melissa Famulari)

These classes will help you apply the tools you have learned in your core and elective coursework to (1) do your own research (to move from being a *consumer* of research to a *producer* of research) and (2) critically assess others' research.

**Texts:**

- Strunk & White, *Elements of Style*
- William Thompson, *A Guide for the Young Economist*

**Goals:**

- For you to learn how to present your ideas, both written and orally.
- For you to learn how to ask, research, and answer a question.
- For you to learn how to listen to other people's ideas, ask insightful questions and provide useful comments/suggestions.

**Conducting a Research Project (based on Ashenfelter, Levine, Zimmerman, "Statistics and Econometrics")**

1. Ask a question (and think about why the answer to your question is important).  
Make sure your question is not too broad!
2. Find out who else has asked your question (or a similar one). How did they go about answering it – what were the strengths/weaknesses with their approach? Look for articles at JSTOR, NBER, Econlit, Google Scholar, Google search but add following condition "site:.edu" or "site:.gov".
3. What can you add to the literature? This is a must for a PhD in economics. GREAT if you can do this as undergrads
4. What is the answer to your question or what is the most you can conclude given your research? What avenues do you see for future research?
5. Your model is an article or note in *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Journal of Political Economy*

**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. I highly recommend that you review "Senior Thesis Program Handbook" at

<http://www.princeton.edu/economics/undergraduate/#SIW>

An all around useful web site, created by Bill Goffe, is Resources for Economists on the Internet, at <http://www.aeaweb.org/RFE/>

**Meeting other Faculty**

You should meet the faculty member(s) with interests most similar to your own, based on your research topic. We will talk more about this as you start working on your research topics the first few weeks of class. There are many benefits of meeting early in your project: getting helpful early guidance and possibly really getting to know one of our professors. There are also costs: you may use up a valuable visit (faculty time is very scarce) and learn information you could have easily figured out on your own.

### **Presentations**

In the middle of the first quarter, you'll present a review of the literature in your area. Frame the question; report on prevailing (and differing if any) schools of thought. For empirical work, explain data sources. At the end of the first quarter, you'll present a preliminary view of your research. Aim at 15 minute presentations with 5 minutes of questions and discussion. This is an opportunity to present your work and get feedback from the entire class and me on your research ideas.

### **Written papers**

A preliminary draft of your paper is due at the last class meeting of the Fall quarter, Wednesday, November 30, 2011. We will hold paper conferences during the final exam week, December 5 - 9. First drafts of papers will be due mid-February, followed by more paper conferences and final drafts of papers due during the last week of classes of the Winter quarter.

### **Grading**

Grades are assigned for the full 2-quarter sequence. The grade recorded at the end of Fall quarter is "IP," "in progress." Dropping the course by the end of the ninth week in the Fall results in the notation "W." Dropping the course in the Winter quarter may result in a grade of "F" (at least for the Fall) --- **don't do this.**

### **Class Attendance**

Attendance is required at all MW class meetings.

### **Course timeline**

Week 1, 9/26: Organizational meeting,

9/28: Guest lecture, Ms. Daphne Chang

Week 2: 10/3, 10/5 Introduction to Library Resources, Ms. Adele Barsh

Bring fully charged laptops. We'll be doing some hands-on web literature search exercises, with the leadership of Ms. Adele Barsh, UCSD's economics librarian.

Please send Ms. Barsh <[abarsh@ucsd.edu](mailto:abarsh@ucsd.edu)> (with a copy to me) a short (2 sentences is plenty) description of your planned paper topic. Something like: "industrial organization of newspaper industry," or "inheritance tax effect on long term capital accumulation and economic growth." This will allow Ms. Barsh to target some of the topics for literature search. We can change topics later if we need to. We just need this to get started on the literature search exercise.

Week 3 10/10, 10/12: Student presentations on research topics

Week 4: 10/17, 10/19: Student presentations on research topics

**Due on 10/19:** Written paper topic proposal: includes at least 3 references and data sources you will use (for empirical topic) .

Week 5: 10/24, 10/26 Student presentations on literature review

Week 6: 10/31, 11/2 Student presentations on literature review

**Due on 11/4** (to Prof. Starr's mailbox in room 207): Written literature review submission (hard copy)

Week 7: 11/7, 11/9 No class meeting. Individual consultation with Prof. Starr

Week 8: 11/14 Student presentations on preliminary research

11/16 Student presentations on preliminary research

Week 9: 11/21 Student presentations on preliminary research

11/23 No meeting

Week 10: 11/28 Student presentations on preliminary research

11/30 Preliminary research paper due. Party!

Final Exam Week: Paper conferences with Prof. Starr

Winter Quarter 2012 (TBA)