

Economics 191A-B, 2012-13: Preliminary Syllabus

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:50 PM, 244 Sequoyah. Prof. Ross M. Starr (rstarr@ucsd.edu).

The Senior Essay Seminar (Econ 191A-191B) is for students with superior records in the Economics Department. It is also two of the required courses for majors wishing to graduate with the phrase "with highest distinction" on their diplomas (for joint math/econ majors it's more complicated; check with U.G. Advisor). For a pep-talk on how great this course is, go to <http://economics.ucsd.edu/economicsinaction/issue-4/valuing-research.php> .

Texts:

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

The course is graded "In Progress" during the fall quarter and a final grade for the fall and winter is submitted at the end of the winter quarter based on the term paper. It is not practical to withdraw during the winter quarter; that may result in a grade of "F" for the fall quarter. If you wish to withdraw, please do so in a timely fashion during the fall quarter.

Approximate calendar:

Week 0: 9/27: No meeting

Week 1: 10/2: Organizational Meeting

10/4: Quick survey of planned research topics: 5 minutes each.

Week 2: 10/9, 10/11 Introduction to Library Resources, Ms. Adele Barsh, Ms. Annelise Sklar both of the UCSD library . Ms. Irene Chang (campus representative of OECD --- Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development). Bring fully charged laptops

Week 3 10/16, 10/18: Student presentations on research topics

Written statement of research topic due Friday this week with selected references and brief outline of issues to be treated.

Week 4: 10/23, 10/25: Student presentations on literature review

Week 5: 10/30, 11/1 Student presentations on literature review, on 10/30 Brief visit from OECD representative Ms. Kathleen DeBoer

Week 6: 11/6, 11/8 Student presentations on preliminary research

End of Week 6: Written literature review submission

Week 7: 11/13 Student presentations on preliminary research

11/15 No class meeting.

Week 8: 11/20 No class meeting

11/22 Holiday. No meeting

Week 9: 11/27 Student presentations on preliminary research

11/29 Student presentations on preliminary research

Week 10: 12/4 No meeting

12/6 Preliminary research paper due. Party!

Final Exam Week: Paper conferences with Prof. Starr

This class is an opportunity to write an original research paper. The topic should be focused --- small enough actually to write something worthwhile --- and on an area where you've already completed the relevant electives. For example, you could write on "The Collapse of the Fixed Exchange Rate Regime: Bretton Woods Fails after Three Decades," or "The Challenge of the Euro: Can a Common Currency Area

Survive?” These topics would be most appropriate if you've taken upper division macro, upper division international trade, and upper division international finance.

The paper can be on an applied empirical topic, a theoretical topic, a policy issue, an historical topic, In 2010-11, topics treated included: salary determination in major league baseball; long term effects on individual economic success of labor market entry during recession; evaluation of microfinance success in rural India; high frequency trading on US financial markets; Ideally the completed paper should be of quality and significance suitable for publication in a professional economics journal (only a few term papers will actually achieve this target). Prominent journals to sample include *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *Economics Letters*, The typical completed paper will run 7500 – 10,000 words.

The research process usually includes a sequence of steps (not necessarily in this order) :

- Topic selection
- Literature Review
- Consultation with expert faculty
- Consultation with specialist librarians to identify data and literature
- Narrowing the topic
- Locating and managing data (for an empirical project)
- Research Plan
- First draft
- Completion

Class meetings will focus on research methods, introduction to library resources, student presentations of work in progress including class discussion.

Attendance is required.

Final papers will be reviewed for originality using Turnitin.com.