H195Y

A do it yourself course
Goal: find a thesis advisor
That’s not as easy as it sounds

• Steps
  – Find an interesting topic
  – formulate a hypothesis one can reject
  – show that it’s feasible
    • get data
    • get ??
    • do preliminary test
  – write a prospectus
Why this could be the class from Hell
You have to do your own thing
But writing a thesis is doing your own thing
Steps

1. Read some theses

• Theses from 2007-08 are online
• Try
  – Zhenyu Lia (2008) Citation Winner
  – Ashley Smith (2006)
  – Maricel Montano (2005?)
• Many old theses are in the Undergraduate Office
Step 2: try out some ideas

• Write out short (1 or 2 paragraphs) essays for three ideas
• Search economic sources for papers on your topics: try here
  • http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/econ/econhonors.html
• Don’t be discouraged if someone wrote on your topic—if it is interesting and feasible someone worked on it
Step 3: Formalize

• Put your best idea in terms of a simple economic model (this is hard)
• Form it as a hypothesis that could be rejected
Step 4: Get data

• Find data
  – try http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/wikis/datalab/

• Calculate summary stats
  – mean
  – variance
  – covariance
Step 5: Recalibrate

• Do you like your topic?
• Can you explain it to your Mom?
• Is it feasible?
  – can you get data?
  – can you really do an experiment?
• If the answer to two of these questions is NO, then start over
Step 6: Write a Prospectus
(5 to 10 pages)

• Idea & why it is interesting
• Economic theory (model)
• Hypothesis
• Data
• Preliminary test
• Where you go from here
• Bibliography
To get an advisor

- you must
  - convince them
    - you have a feasible thesis topic
    - you can do it
      - because the worst thing is to start and it doesn’t work
      - there are no C+ theses
  - or work as an intern (URAP for example) so they know you can do a thesis