

## ***ECONOMICS H195A — SENIOR HONOR'S THESIS SEMINAR***

<http://socs.berkeley.edu/~olney/fall03/econ195>

Meetings: Mondays, 10:00 a.m - 12:00 noon, 241 Cory Hall

This syllabus is the contract between you and me. Please read it carefully. "I didn't read the syllabus" is not an acceptable excuse for overlooking an assignment, being late, and so on. Prof. Olney

Economics H195A is for senior Economics majors who meet the gpa requirements and who plan to write an honor's thesis. The course is *not* a prerequisite to H195B. The goal of the seminar is to enable you to choose a thesis topic, begin research, write a thesis prospectus, and line up an advisor. There are two sections of Econ H195A: this one, and a section taught by Prof. Steve Goldman. If you already have a thesis topic and question, or if you are not planning to write an empirical thesis, you should take Prof. Goldman's section of Econ H195A.

### ***Adding the Course***

Enrollment is limited to 25 students. You must be an economics major. You must have a gpa of 3.3 overall and 3.5 in upper-division economics courses. You must have completed two or more upper-division economics courses beyond 100A and 100B. You should have completed or be enrolled in Economics 140 or 141. You must intend to write an honor's thesis prior to Spring or Fall 2004 graduation.

Admission is by approval. To petition for admission, submit the completed application form that is available on the course webpage to Sandy Jaeger in 543 Evans.

### ***Professor's Office Hours***

Professor Olney, 691 Evans Hall, 642-6083, [MOlney@econ.berkeley.edu](mailto:MOlney@econ.berkeley.edu)

Drop-in: Mondays, 12:00 - 12:30 p.m. for Econ 195 students only (most weeks)

Wednesdays, 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Other times by appointment.

### ***Required Textbooks***

McCloskey, Deirdre N. *Economical Writing*, 2d edition, 2000. Waveland Press, Inc.

Peterson, Rai. *Real World Research: Sources and Strategies for Composition*. Houghton-Mifflin, 2000.

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th revised edition. University of Chicago Press, 1996.

### ***About the Books***

McCloskey is my favorite little book on writing for economists. Each chapter is no more than three pages long and contains one important rule for writing. If we all wrote more like Deirdre and less like economists, economics would be a lot more interesting. You must read all of McCloskey for September 8.

Peterson is the best book I could find that puts into writing what I try to do in this class, taking the readers from "I want to write a thesis" to "I wrote a thesis!" The book is background for the course but will not be explicitly referred to in class.

Turabian is "the" resource for how to assemble a paper in economics. It is a condensation of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is the style preferred by economists. She sets out how to do footnotes, endnotes, bibliographies, and tables. She tells you how to format the paper. It's all there. This is one that I want you to buy and keep as a reference book. You must use Turabian to properly complete the assignment due October 13.

### ***Goals for This Seminar and Strategy***

My goal for you: by the end of the term, you will have a well-defined thesis topic, an advisor for Spring 2004, and a 5-8 page thesis prospectus. To accomplish the goal, we will meet weekly. You will attend a library seminar, complete a number of writing assignments, learn Stata, and make an oral presentation.

### ***Responsibilities and Requirements***

My responsibilities are to design appropriate class activities, come to class prepared, encourage class participation, promptly grade and return papers, be available during scheduled office hours and for scheduled appointments, and stimulate an enthusiasm for economics, for research, and for learning.

Your responsibilities are to attend and participate in the seminar two hours per week, complete all assignments on time, and write and present a prospectus.

### ***Letter of Introduction***

For our second meeting, please write a one-page letter of introduction to Professor Olney. Include your name and anything about yourself that you would like to share. It may be typed or handwritten. It may be brought to class on September 8 or sent by e-mail to [MOlney@econ.berkeley.edu](mailto:MOlney@econ.berkeley.edu). It will not be graded nor returned.

### ***Special Accommodations***

If you require special accommodations due to learning or other disability, speak with Professor Olney **no later than September 8**. You will need an evaluation form from Disabled Students' Program (230 César Chávez Center). Talk with Professor Olney before September 8; don't wait for your appointment with DSP.

### ***Course Grades***

The course can only be taken on a P/NP basis. Complete all assignments on time and you receive a P. You can turn in two assignments late and still pass. But if you turn in three or more assignments late, you fail (receive an NP). If you do not complete all assignments, you fail the course (receive an NP). If you will be out of town — not unusual with seniors who are doing recruiting — be sure to email your assignment to Professor Olney so that it arrives by 9:30 a.m. on the day the assignment is due. Each assignment will be evaluated with a +, ✓, -, or "please redo." You must receive a +, ✓, or - in order for the assignment to count as having been completed. Assignments that receive "please redo" do not count as having been completed on time.

### ***Academic Honesty Policy***

In fairness to students who put in an honest effort, cheaters will be treated harshly. Any evidence of cheating will result in a score of zero (0) on that assignment or paper. Cheating on a thesis is the "felony" of cheating, and stupid besides. Incidences of cheating will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, which may administer additional punishment. Cheating includes plagiarism. What is most important is that everyone learns the proper methods of crediting their sources so as to avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Plagiarism includes appropriation of whole passages with or without credit, appropriation of words and phrases without credit, appropriation of both main and supporting ideas without credit, and paraphrasing without credit. Plagiarism also includes submitting a paper written by someone else. If you are unsure of how to properly cite sources, ask Professor Olney for guidance.

### ***"I want to write an honor's thesis"***

I'll get you there, but it will take a lot of cooperation and work on your part. If you are not committed to writing a thesis, please drop the seminar right away while there is still time to find another class for your schedule.

Writing a thesis involves writing, researching, and thinking. Some people believe the writing comes at the end. They are wrong. We write to think, we write to research, we write to write. Many economics majors have little experience writing. Many of our assignments will therefore be designed to improve your writing skills.

Writing a thesis requires critical thinking about the economics literature. Some of our writing assignments will therefore call upon you to critically analyze articles in economics.

Writing a thesis requires, in most though not all cases, empirical analysis. We will have two sessions in the Social Sciences Computing Lab, 64 Barrows, in order to work with Stata and practice downloading data sets. You should also be sure to take Economics 140 or 141 this term at the latest.

Writing a thesis also requires an advisor. In the Spring 2004 term, each of you will have an individual faculty advisor. Ideally your advisor will have expertise in your area of interest. You must locate your own advisor; I do not match students with advisors. It is best to have someone lined up by Thanksgiving if not before. As soon as you have an idea as to your thesis topic and know who you want to ask to be your advisor, go visit that faculty member during office hours and ask. Many faculty members limit themselves to one or two advisees, on a first-come first-serve basis.

To help everyone break the ice with at least one faculty member, you will be asked to interview a member of the faculty. I will prepare suggested questions as a guideline. The goal of the interview is to find out how the faculty member goes about the process of coming up with research questions and doing research.

Writing a thesis requires a road map, more commonly called a “prospectus.” Your prospectus sets out what topic you wish to study, why it is important, what answerable questions you intend to address, critical analysis of what others have written on this topic, and what resources you will use in your research. Your final assignment will be the completion of your prospectus, which you will use as your starting point in Spring 2004 with your advisor.

### ***Due Dates***

An assignment is due practically every week. Complete all the assignments on time and you pass the seminar. Don’t complete every assignment, or turn in more than two of them late, and you fail the seminar. It’s that easy.

*Format of assignments:* Assignments can be turned in during class or emailed to Professor Olney as a *virus-free* attachment. If the assignment is emailed, it must arrive by 9:30 a.m. on the day it is due. For each assignment, please put your name, the date, **and the word count** in the upper right hand corner. Include a brief centered title. Use an 11 or 12 pt font. Double space (or 1.5) your text. Use a 1 inch margin on all sides. Use a ragged-right edge (left justify). For example:

Martha Olney August 16, 2003 Word Count: 60
Syllabus for Economics H195A
Text starts here. The word count includes only the text, not the title nor the headings at top right. Your word processor has a way of counting the number of words in a block of text. If you don’t know what that is, use the “help” command on your word processor and search for help on “count” or “word count.”

- September 8      **Letter of Introduction:** A one-page paper in which you introduce yourself to Prof. Olney. For this assignment only, handwritten is ok. E-mailed is ok. Typed and turned in at class is preferred.
- September 8      **250-300 words: What topics I like in economics and why I like those topics.** Note the word limitation. The assignment has two purposes: to get you to think about what topics you do like in economics, and to have you work at writing concisely and clearly. **This is not an assignment to be dashed off just before you come to class!! Bring *THREE COPIES* of your brief essay with you to class on September 8.**
- September 22      **Three Assignments are due.**
- [1] **Library Quiz** After the library seminar on September 15, you will receive a quiz by email. Return it by email before 8:00 a.m. on September 22.
- [2] **Five McCloskey rules applied to your essay.** For each of five different “rules,” apply the rule to a sentence/passage in your September 8 version of your essay. Type it up this way:  
Original sentence: <the original sentence from the September 8 version>  
Revised sentence: <your best revision here>  
Rule applied: <use the chapter headings of McCloskey to indicate what rule you applied>
- [3] **250 words: What topics I like in economics and why I like those topics, REVISED.** Based on the editing suggestions you receive on September 8, revise your brief essay. Bring one copy of your revised essay to class on September 22.
- September 29      **Topic idea(s).**  
*Students who are still searching for a viable thesis topic* will turn in brief write-ups of three to five different ideas. Each write-up should include a statement of the topic, why it seems interesting, and what researchable questions you might ask. The write-up should be **less than 250 words per idea.**
- (September 29) *Students who reasonably believe they already have a viable thesis topic* will turn in a 400 to 600 word essay that includes a statement of the topic, why it is interesting and important, and what researchable questions you plan to ask.
- October 6          **400-500 words: Critical analysis.** You will read an article in an economics journal, identify assumption(s) made by the author(s), and critically analyze the argument(s). Your approach will be based on the method discussed in class on September 22. Turn in a copy of the article with your paper.
- October 13        **400 to 500 words: One topic idea.** Include a statement of the topic, why you think it is interesting and important, and what researchable questions you plan to ask.  
**Attach an annotated bibliography.** Use the citation system given in Turabian. Include at least seven different items. At least four must be academic journal articles. At least four must be published after 1990. **Annotate your bibliography;** that is, for each item, include one sentence that briefly states what is in the source and a second sentence that explains how the source will be useful.
- October 20        **200 to 300 words: Faculty interview write-up.** Write up a report of your interview. What you write will be posted to the class website, so don’t say anything you don’t want the world (and the person you interviewed) to read. **Please submit the assignment by email.**



Monday, September 15 Read: Peterson, Chap. 3 & 4 <b>Meet in 350C Moffitt</b>	Library seminar with librarian Jim Ronningen in Doe Library. <b>Go directly to 350C Moffitt in the library</b>
Monday, September 22 Read: Peterson, Chap. 6 & 7	<b>Library quiz DUE by email by 8:00 a.m.; application of 5 McCloskey rules DUE; revision of “What topics I like in economics ” DUE.</b> Reading economics; critical thinking and analysis; compiling a reading list; proper bibliographic methods; online data sets
Monday, September 29 Read: Peterson, Chap 8 <b>Meet in 64 Barrows</b>	<b>Three to five topic ideas DUE.</b> Faculty interview assignments distributed; Overview of Stata
Monday, October 6 Read: Peterson, Chap. 9 & 10 <b>Meet in 64 Barrows</b>	<b>Critical analysis DUE.</b> Continued discussion of data analysis and use of Stata.
Monday, October 13 Read/use: Turabian book	<b>Topic idea DUE. Annotated bibliography DUE.</b> Small group discussion of ideas; evaluating ideas; formulating your own answerable questions;
Monday, October 20	<b>Faculty interview write-up DUE. Please submit assignment by email.</b> Report on faculty interviews; discussion of economic modeling.
Monday, October 27 Read: Peterson, Chap. 11 & 12	<b>Data description and analysis DUE. Economic model DUE.</b> Discussion of writing a prospectus.
Monday, November 3	<b>Draft of prospectus DUE.</b> Short class. Sign up for 15 minute appointment with Prof. Olney.
Monday, November 10	No class. Instead, everyone will have a 15 minute appointment with Professor Olney some time between November 3 and November 17 to go over the draft of the prospectus.
Tuesday, November 11	<b><i>Veterans’ Day Holiday</i></b>
Monday, November 17	No class. Instead, everyone will have had a 15 minute appointment with Professor Olney some time between November 3 and November 17 to go over the draft of the prospectus.
Monday, November 24	<b>Prospectus DUE.</b> Do you have an advisor yet? You should. Presentations of prospectus.
Thursday, November 27	<b><i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i></b>
Monday, December 1	Presentations of prospectus.