Course Syllabus
Department of Economics
ECON 499 Section A01
Honours Seminar
September 2019

Instructors:  Dr. Graham Voss  
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Office Hours: By Appointment

Every student is responsible for reading and understanding the content of this course outline.

Course Description

The course is focused on students developing and writing an Honours Thesis, a work of novel research, providing students with an opportunity to engage with and produce research pushing the frontiers of economic knowledge. Students will learn about current research methodology, study seminal papers in economics, and learn how to write about and present research effectively. The course is taught in an open seminar style which places an onus on students to interact with both the instructors and each other.

Note: This is a course spanning over two terms and it runs from September through April. Pre-requisites: Admission to the Economics Honours Program (see University Calendar for details)

Class Information

Lecture time: Mondays and Thursday 8:30am-9:50am
Location: BEC 363

Office Hours: By appointment.

Texts/Materials

There is no text for the course. We will read various articles throughout the term—most of which will be available online. When this is not the case, copies will be posted on CourseSpaces or distributed in class.
Grading Scheme

Class Participation: 15%
In-class Presentations: 15%
Written Assignments: 20%
Honour’s Thesis Paper and Presentation: 50% (30% on paper, 20% on presentation)

The University’s undergraduate grading scale with numerical score/letter grade equivalency, and descriptions can be found at the following: University Grading Schedule [http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-09/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html](http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-09/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html).

Course Website

Materials and announcements will be found on CourseSpaces.

Policies

This course adheres to the Undergraduate Course Policies of the Department of Economics that deal with academic integrity (plagiarism and cheating), attendance, grading, academic concessions, travel plans, students with a disability, and policy on inclusivity and diversity.

Further information related to policies:

Classroom Etiquette

Come to seminar prepared, and treat your colleagues politely and professionally. Seminars, at their best, are a place of lively discussion and debate. You are encouraged to disagree with each other (and with your professors) but do so respectfully. You have the privilege of working closely with the very best students in UVic Economics this year. Many of your classmates will go on to successful careers in economics and other fields. It pays to get along now, because doing so will help you through this difficult and stressful Honours year. It will also pay later to get along now, because many of your classmates will become successful and well-connected—just the sorts of friends that may be able to help you out professionally in the future.

Academic Integrity

All students in this seminar must carefully read “What is Plagiarism?” [http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php#whatis](http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php#whatis) for the definition of plagiarism.

Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students are expected to observe the same standards of scholarly integrity as their academic and professional counterparts. A student who is found to have engaged in unethical academic behaviour, including the practices described in the Policy on Academic Integrity [http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html](http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html) in the University Calendar, is subject to penalty by the University. We will prosecute anyone we catch plagiarizing. Period. At a minimum, if you are caught plagiarizing, you are likely to be expelled from the Honours Program. If you have any question about
what constitutes plagiarism, we are very happy to explain this. Check with us before taking a chance.

E-mail
Use email judiciously. It is bad form to email the professor about a question that was clearly covered in lecture or on the course website.

Course Content

Class Discussion
This course may be very different from other classes you have taken. The quality of the seminar will be determined less by your professors and more by the effort each of you places on making it work. If you show up well-prepared with insightful comments and questions, not only will you contribute to a higher quality of our discussions in class but also your thesis will be of much higher quality than if you are unprepared or disengaged, and your classmates and professors will notice if you are unprepared or disengaged. Your Class Participation grade in the course will, in part, reflect your effort and success at contributing productively to the discussion.

It is advisable to do your weekly seminar preparation early so that you have time to mull over some of the big ideas we will be discussing. This will also allow you to discuss material with your classmates ahead of time, which is a good way to hone your preparation.

Presentations
Students will be asked to present on at least four separate occasions on topics related to their Honours Thesis as follows:

- Presentation of a paper related to the general topic area of proposed thesis (10 minutes followed by 5 minutes of general class discussion): October. Presentations are to be supported by visuals and will be chaired by a fellow student. This presentation should be viewed as a practice presentation and as such will not count toward the In-Class Presentation grade.
- Thesis Proposal Presentation (20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of general class discussion): November. Presentations are to be supported by visuals. This presentation will count toward the In-Class Presentation grade.
- Presentation of draft thesis (30 minutes followed by 10 minutes of general class discussion): February/March. Presentations are to be supported by visuals. This presentation should be viewed as a practice presentation and as such will not count toward the In-Class Presentation grade.
- Thesis presentation (conference format; with colleagues from Econ Dept. 30 minutes followed by 10 minutes for questions): April. Presentations are chaired by the Honours advisors. This presentation will count toward the Honour's Thesis Paper and Presentation grade.

Attending Research Seminars
The Economics Department hosts (near) weekly research seminars that bring in scholars from all over the world to present current research. The intellectually curious student should want to attend most research seminars, to learn more about economics and how research is done. While research seminar attendance is generally optional, we will require you to attend
some of these seminars and will give you at least a week’s notice to attend a particular seminar.
Research seminars are held Fridays from 3:00-4:30pm in BEC 363. The full schedule (frequently updated) can be found at http://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/economics/research/home/seminars/index.php

We will often follow up these research seminars with a discussion in the next Honours seminar. In some cases we might ask research seminar speakers to attend the Honours seminar and discuss their research and what it’s like to be an academic economist with you.

Attending required research seminars will count toward your Class Participation grade.

Written assignments
Students will be asked to write and submit for grading several writing assignments throughout the terms. Possibilities include a draft of your thesis introduction, written summaries/critiques of seminal articles relevant to your topic, problem sets, and briefing notes. These assignments will count toward your Written Assignments grade.

Homework exercises
Students will be required from time to time to complete homework exercises intended to complement and extend in-class discussions of topics of interest. Sometimes these exercises will consist of reading and assessing material for class discussion, in which case they will be reflected in your Class Participation grade.

Honours Thesis
Much of the course is structured around the development and execution of a major research project, the Honour’s Thesis. Students are encouraged to investigate topics of their own interest and write a paper which constitutes novel research and which advances the state of knowledge on that topic. After identifying broad questions of interest, students will arrange for a faculty supervisor for the Thesis, become thoroughly acquainted with the relevant contemporary published literature on the topic, identify appropriate sources of data if the project is empirical, conduct the necessary research, and write up results in a formal thesis format. At the close of the course, the student will present a summary of their findings to the class and interested faculty.

You alone are responsible for making progress on your thesis. If you find yourself running off the rails, it is up to you to take charge of the situation and quickly get back on track. Seek advice from the Honours co-supervisors and your Thesis advisor if necessary. But ultimately this is your project. You own it and you are responsible for whether or not it turns out well.