

**SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS**

**ECONOMICS 495  
ECONOMICS DISTINCTION THESIS SEMINAR I  
Fall 2015**

Professor Mary E. Lovely  
225 Eggers Hall  
Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 2:00-3:00  
and by appt.  
Office Phone: 443-9048  
Email: [melovely@maxwell.syr.edu](mailto:melovely@maxwell.syr.edu)

**SEMINAR DESCRIPTION**

This seminar is the first semester in a year-long course for economics undergraduate thesis students. An undergraduate thesis has long been a signal of academic excellence and achievement in a major field of study. The creation and execution of an original research project is often the most rewarding experience of an undergraduate career. The project immerses the student in sustained intellectual activity, encourages depth of inquiry, and develops research, writing, and presentation skills. Our year-long sequence is designed to support the student through this process. As such, it requires the student to work in close consultation with the instructor and with other members of the seminar. Through these interactions, the student is engaged in an intellectual community focused on the creation of economic research.

Economics 495 is open to students selected for the Economics Distinction Program. It offers Distinction students the opportunity to design an original economics research project in a supportive and challenging academic environment. Throughout the semester we will engage in a variety of exercises and assignments focused on the preparation of a detailed thesis proposal and the commencement of project research activities. Seminar participants will present their own evolving ideas, constructively comment on the ideas of other participants, learn about research tools on campus and beyond, and model the ideals of research integrity and research quality. **Students registered for the course must simultaneously enroll in the one-credit course, ECN 400 M001 # 29783 Distinction Practicum.** This practicum provides training in STATA programming and it will be an invaluable resource as you undertake your empirical research project.

ECN 495 is followed by a Spring course, ECN 496: Economics Distinction Thesis Seminar II. The Spring seminar is truly student-centered research, as thesis writers present their ongoing research, constructively engage the work of other honors students, and work in close cooperation with a faculty mentor to complete their research. The ECN 495-496 course sequence culminates in completion of the Thesis Project and, for those who also maintain a minimum 3.4 cumulative grade point average, graduation with Distinction in Economics. Economics thesis students present their work in an Economics department seminar and also

present research posters in the Maxwell Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship, which is planned for May 4, 2016.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course employs a professional development model for academic research. Our objectives in the course are:

- 1) To develop critical thinking skills by developing an advanced understanding of linking cause and effect in economics research;
- 2) To develop research design skills;
- 3) To enhance analytic skills through application to concrete case studies;
- 4) To develop public speaking skills by presenting research findings in a public forum;
- 5) To incorporate feedback from oral presentation and instructor's written comments in written work to improve analytic and writing skills; and
- 6) To produce an original research project of publishable quality.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This seminar is designed to meet the needs of Economics thesis writers as they proceed through the thesis planning stage to the execution of those plans. As such, our course schedule is fluid and participants will need to pay close attention to the class schedule. Our course Blackboard site has a class schedule that will be updated regularly. Students should refer to Blackboard if there is a doubt about any day's activities and readings.

Seminar participants are required to attend all sessions and to participate actively in seminar discussions. A participant must notify the instructor **IN ADVANCE** if he or she must miss a seminar session for unavoidable reasons. The instructor can **ALWAYS** be contacted by email. Unexcused seminar absences will result in a lower course grade.

<u>GRADING ELEMENT</u>	<u>SHARE OF FINAL GRADE</u>
Seminar Attendance & Assignments	50
Draft Proposal	25
Revised Thesis Proposal	25

**Religious Observance Policy** SU's religious observances policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances until the end of the second week of class. For more information on this policy, please see [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm)

**Academic Integrity Policy** Students are expected to maintain the highest standard of academic integrity per Syracuse University policy. Any student found to have plagiarized on a written assignment or cheated on an examination – whether help was given or received -- will be sanctioned with a grade of “F” in the course and will be referred to the Dean’s office. To avoid the problem of plagiarism (presenting someone else’s work as your own), be sure to attribute all information, data, arguments, and language – even if paraphrased – borrowed from sources to the original author and to document the source fully. **Attribution** = “According to Moore and Pubantz (1995), the United Nations system is complex...” **Documentation** = source citation in foot- or end-note form or using parenthetical citation: (Moore & Pubantz (1995), 14-15). Please note that parenthetical citation requires a “Works Cited” list with complete source information at the end of the paper. For more information, please see the SU Academic Honesty policy statement at <http://www-hl.syr.edu/cas-pages/PromAcademicHonesty.htm> and the library website for help with bibliographic form at <http://library.syr.edu/cite/index.html>

*This class will use the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin, which compares submitted documents against documents on the Internet and against student papers submitted to Turnitin at SU and at other colleges and universities. I will take your knowledge of the subject matter of this course and your writing level and style into account in interpreting the originality report. Keep in mind that all papers you submit for this class will become part of the [Turnitin.com](http://Turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.*

**Disability Policy** Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Syracuse University and your course instructors are committed to your academic success and support Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (A990). This requires that "no otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity." If you believe you need academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 804 University Avenue, Room 309, or call 315-443-4498, for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities an “Accommodation Authorization Letter,” as appropriate. Students will need to meet with Dr. Lovely during her office hours to present this letter for her signature, and she will then gladly make all ODS-authorized accommodations for any student with a disability. Because accommodations require early planning and cannot be provided retroactively, students must contact ODS at the start of the semester.

**Policy on Student Academic Work** I intend to use academic work that you complete this semester for educational purposes in this course during this semester. Your registration and continued enrollment constitute your permission. As a generally accepted practice, honors theses, graduate theses, graduate research projects, dissertations, or other capstone projects submitted in partial fulfillment of degree requirements are placed in the library, University Archives, or department for public reference.

## COURSE MATERIALS

There is one text required for this course, and it is available at the SU Bookstore in for our class: **Joshua D. Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke, Mastering Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect, Princeton University Press, 2015.** Students are also required to read all supplementary readings, which are available for their exclusive academic use on our class Blackboard website. All reading listed in the class schedule is **required**.

### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND REQUIRED READING

Class	Topics	Required Readings
September 1	Overview of seminar requirements and assessment	Course Syllabus
September 3	Conceptualizing research topics	Deconstructing radio and news reports
September 8	The path from cause to effect: randomized trials	Mastering Metrics, Chapter 1
September 10	Case study	Stephanie Good, "Does Assigned Attorney Type Matter for Indigent Defendants? Evidence from Selected Counties," Syracuse University Undergraduate Distinction Project, 2007.
September 15	The path from cause to effect: regression	Mastering Metrics, Chapter 2
September 17	Case study 2	Clay Rehrig, "Does Sexual Orientation affect Earnings?" Syracuse University Undergraduate Distinction Project, 2007.
September 22	The path from cause to effect: instrumental variables	Mastering Metrics, Chapter 3
September 24	Case study 3	Valdrin Berisha, "Immigrant Families' Language Acquisition," Syracuse University Undergraduate Distinction Project, 2015
September 29	The path from cause to effect: Regression Discontinuity Design	Mastering Metrics, Chapter 4
October 1	Case study 4	Kevin Donovan, "Estimating the Causal Effect of Clinical Recommendations on Screening and Vaccination Decisions," Syracuse University Undergraduate Distinction Project, 2015

October 6	The path from cause to effect: Difference-in-difference	Mastering Metrics, Chapter 5
October 8	Case study 5	Brendon Dunham, "The Effect of Minimum Wage on Youth Smoking," Syracuse University Undergraduate Distinction Project, 2013
October 13	SU Resources	Library Visit and Data Hunting
October 15	Proposal peer critiques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining research questions</li> <li>Using theory to build a framework for interpretation</li> </ul>	John W. Creswell, <u>Research Design</u> , The Purpose Statement (Blackboard) Research Questions and Hypotheses (Blackboard)
October 20	Research Designing 1	Student Key References and Theoretical Framework – Group 1
October 22	Research Designing 2	Student Key References and Theoretical Framework – Group 2
October 27	Research Designing 3	Student Key References and Theoretical Framework – Group 3
October 29	Research Designing 4	Student Key References and Theoretical Framework – Group 4
November 3	Research Designing 5	Student Key References and Theoretical Framework – Group 5
November 5	Proposal Workshop	PROJECT OUTLINE DUE Proposal workshop
November 10	<b>Proposal Draft</b>	<b>Due in Class</b>
November 10 & 12	Proposals	Student Proposal Presentations and Critiques (2 presentations)
November 17 & 19	Proposals	Student Proposal Presentations and Critiques (2 presentations)
December 1	Proposals	Student Proposal Presentations and Critiques (2 presentations)
December 3	Proposals	Student Proposal Presentations and Critiques (2 presentations)
December 8	Proposals	Student Proposal Presentations and Critiques (2 presentations)
December 10		Debrief and Evaluations
December 17	<b>REVISED THESIS PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Due by 4:00pm 225 Eggers Hall</b>