

Welcome to ECON 495 Honors Thesis in Economics

I. Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jason Dunick
Office: Buchanan Hall D155
Office Phone: 993-1141
Email: jdunick@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00pm

II. Course Overview

Catalog Description: This is an independent study experience where students will do honors-level research on a self-selected topic in economics culminating in a substantial research paper and an oral presentation.

Learning Outcomes: ECON 495 will be designed to address the learning objectives of a Research and Scholarship intensive course: Students will create a substantial work of scholarship and present their work to a wider audience. Students will also be able to gather evidence appropriate to their research question, assess the validity of key assumptions and the evidence presented, and apply appropriate scholarly conventions in their writing and presentations. These objectives will be demonstrated through the completion of a thesis, an oral presentation, peer-review reports, and a substantial guided revision process.

This course is also designed to meet the learning objectives of a capstone course. The thesis experience will provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of program-level learning goals in microeconomics, macroeconomics, statistical analysis, and effective communication using the tools of discipline. This course is designed to be taken towards the end of a student undergraduate curriculum and each section of this course is limited to a class size of 35 students or less to promote interaction and collaboration.

Project Expectations: This project will take two semesters to complete and typically students register for this course for both the fall and spring semesters. At the end of the fall semester, students who have met the assignment deadlines up to that point will receive an “in-progress” as a grade. Once the project is completed in the spring, the grade will be updated. Students are expected to attend weekly meetings throughout the fall and spring semesters and complete the **seven major components** of the project on time.

Thesis Components:

- Faculty-Approved Proposal (5%)
- First Draft (10%)
- Referee Reports (2) (10% each)
- Solicit Faculty Feedback on Draft (5%)
- Oral Presentation (20%)
- Final Draft with a Cover Letter (40%)

Grading Scale (as a percentage):

A +	100-97	B	86 – 83	C-	72 – 70
A	96 – 93	B-	82 – 80	D	66 – 60
A -	92 – 90	C+	79 – 77	F	59 – 0
B+	89 – 87	C	76 – 73		

Assignment Descriptions (7 Components):

1. Faculty-Approved Proposal

Prior to starting this thesis experience, students must have a research proposal approved. The proposal must describe a research project that can be completed in less than one year with the given academic background and ability of the student and must have been reviewed by at least one other faculty member. This proposal can be developed as part of another class, an independent study, or by participating in ECON 494 a workshop on the honors thesis proposal.

2. First Draft

Students must submit a substantial draft of their project. This research paper must be at least 20 full pages of text with one inch margins and 12-point font (the cover page does not count towards the page requirement). **Student must provide three copies of their draft so it may be circulated for review.**

3. & 4. Referee Reports

Each student will write two referee reports evaluating two different projects written by others. The main goal of this assignment is for students to learn how to give and receive criticism in an effort to improve the quality of each project.

The referee report is made up of two parts:

- 1) A brief summary of the project that includes a restatement of the research question, the research method used, and the main conclusion.
- 2) A description of at least three suggestions to improve the project.

The evaluations should be focused on the content of the project rather than minor grammatical errors. Students should focus their remarks using the following guidelines and their suggestions should address at least two of these guidelines. Please avoid vague statements and generalities and be as specific as possible in your comments.

Consider the following issues when evaluating a draft:

- The quality and relevance of the sources
- The appropriateness of the content for each sub-section
- The validity of the conclusions based on the evidence presented
- Unaddressed issues or questions important to the topic

5. Solicit Faculty Feedback

Once a substantial draft of the paper is complete, students will be required to solicit feedback from a faculty member beyond the course instructor. This feedback should be incorporated into the cover letter.

6. Oral Presentation

Students are required to create a ten minute presentation of their research which will be followed by five to ten minutes period of questions from students, faculty, and audience members.

7. The Final Draft of the Project

For the final submission of the project, students should turn in an entire portfolio from their research project. Each submission must include the following:

- A cover letter that explains how the comments in the referee reports and comments from the presentation (if applicable) were addressed in the final draft
- The original first draft
- The referee reports
- The final draft of the project

III. Course Policies:

Weekly Meetings: Attendance of weekly meetings is necessary to have a successful experience in this project. Excessive absences from these meetings will result in a lowering of your grade for the project.

Communication: Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

Honor Code: Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code in its entirety in completing all requirements for this course. The Honor Code parameters will differ depending on the

assignment and will be clearly explained for each assignment. If at any time you are unsure about the Honor Code implications for a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

Important: No person should be denied educational access because of a disability. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.