ECON 5900/5900H
SENIOR THESIS RESEARCH GROUP
Syllabus

Fall 2020
Section CRN 44294
Weds 5:20-6:10 PM
BLC E007

FACULTY ADVISORS

Profs. Greg Caetano, Josh Kinsler, Ian Schmutte and Meghan Skira

Office hours*
TBA and by appointment

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COURSE OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to help you make the transition from consumers to producers of knowledge. As a student participant in the group, you will write a thesis paper on a topic of your own choosing. Through the thesis, you will sharpen and demonstrate your ability to manipulate and interpret economic data, use economic concepts and ideas, apply analytical methods, engage with scholarly literature, and develop a logical economic argument about a real-world problem.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This research group is intended to provide a collaborative environment to come up with a thesis topic, develop a methodology to study it, and communicate your results. Through the group, you will receive substantial feedback from the four faculty mentors and from your peers. You are also expected to provide feedback as well.

COURSE TEACHING ASSISTANT

Isabella Yerby (iay52914@uga.edu) is a doctoral student in Economics who will assist with the course. You should send all assignments and other communications to her.

PREREQUISITES

You should have completed coursework in **intermediate microeconomics** and **econometrics**. We also expect you will have familiarity with some type of statistical software: e.g. R, Stata, SAS. If you have not completed these courses, please let us know before the first day of class so we can discuss options.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Most course communication will take place through a Slack workspace: https://ugaeconsenior-eee6718.slack.com. Let us know at once if you encounter difficulty signing up. Please use Slack for any question to do with course logistics or with your research. Any other matters should be directed to the TA. In order to discuss any data / coding questions with the professors or TA, you must send the data and .do (if using Stata) or .r (if using R) files beforehand so we can

replicate the problem you are having. More information on this will be given in the econometrics review early in the semester.

RELATIONSHIP TO PROF. KINMAN'S ECON 5900
This course has no formal connection to Prof. Kinman's sections of ECON 5900. However, we will adopt the same formatting guidelines for the thesis and will also use the same assessment rubric. Please see the *Senior Thesis Handbook* for further details.

As a participant in this group you **will not** need to find a separate faculty advisor. Each of the four faculty mentors will serve as co-advisers for your thesis.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS
There is no required textbook for this class. We will occasionally circulate reading materials that we think may be useful for various stages of the research process. The following books are generally useful guides to research methods in applied microeconomic research and effectively communicating your findings.

Angrist, Joshua D. and Pischke, Joern-Steffen 2009. *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton University Press.

Cunningham, Scott 2018. *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. https://www.scunning.com/mixtape.html (this is a free download and incorporates numerous examples with corresponding Stata code)

Turabian, Kate L. 2013. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McCloskey, Deirdre. 2000. *Economical Writing*. 2nd ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

In addition to the references above, you may want to have a standard econometrics text handy, and may find it useful to have a textbook on intermediate microeconomics as well as on the field of your topic. That is, if you are working on a topic on labor markets (say, immigration or earnings inequality) it can be useful to have a labor economics textbook handy.

THE THESIS
Your thesis will be an academic paper that addresses an economic question of interest to you. The final version should present a well-referenced, thesis-driven argument that proposes an answer to that question. Your answer will be based on your independent analysis of relevant models, data, and the existing scholarly literature on your topic. The paper should be an original synthesis of material and cannot have been submitted for credit in another course.

Your final thesis grade will be determined by the faculty advisors. Your final grade for the course will be based on your thesis grade with deductions assigned if you fail to attend or miss deadlines (see below).

COMPUTING

Note that for this group, we expect that your thesis will involve an analysis of economic data using the tools of econometrics. You are welcome to use any statistical software you prefer, but should be aware of a few issues. The faculty mentors and the RA are all familiar with Stata. Some of us also have a bit of experience with R, SAS, Matlab, and other programming languages. You can count on us being able to help with Stata, but for other software, you may want to inquire.

The Terry College has developed a shared computing environment (server) that students can use free of charge to access full versions of Stata and MATLAB. We will provide more details and pointers to relevant training early in the semester. We also encourage you to make use of the Analytics Lab in the Terry College which provides drop in consultation on data analysis and econometrics.

CLASS MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

We will hold synchronous meetings using the Zoom platform using a link we will share later. There will be three different meeting formats:

- Full group: all are encouraged to attend, and we will discuss issues of general applicability to your research.
- Small groups: students are split into small groups to meet together with faculty advisors. In these sessions, students will take turns sharing their progress and we will all provide feedback.
- One-on-one: during several weeks, we will not have formal meetings, but you are encouraged to set meetings with one or more of the faculty advisers for more detailed guidance.

In weeks that we have small group meetings, you must e-mail the TA **2-3 PowerPoint slides** by 5pm the evening before that describe your progress, current results, and any problems or questions you have. These slides will form the basis of our group discussion.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not require attendance. However, attendance in this group is very important, and we expect that you will make every effort to attend each week.

ASSIGNMENTS

We will collect written assignments on **the following occasions**

- Sep. 16: Research proposal
- Oct. 14: Draft research methodology and preliminary results
- Nov. 18: Rough draft

- Dec. 2:   Final paper due
- Dec. 11: Revisions due

Thesis assessment

Your final thesis should conform in style and content to the guidelines described in the *Senior Thesis Handbook*. We will review your rough draft for formatting and to flag major content issues. Our assessment will be based on the rubric described in the Thesis Evaluation Form. After you submit the final paper, we will conduct a preliminary assessment and return a list of suggested changes along with an initial grade. Once you have received our preliminary assessment, you can choose to keep your initial grade or to submit a revision that addresses our comments.

DEADLINE POLICY

To provide structure and ensure that you are making steady progress with your thesis, we have established deadlines that you must meet throughout the semester. **Failure to meet one of these deadlines will result in the reduction of your final course grade by one letter grade.**

If you need a few extra days, contact us **at least 24 hours before the deadline, specifying the date you propose to turn your assignment in**, and we will try to accommodate you**.** In that case, your proposed date will become your new deadline and will be treated according to this policy.

THE BATEMAN PRIZE
Each year, in honor of the late J. Fred Bateman, a prolific professor of economics and devoted mentor of student writers, the Department awards up to three cash prizes for outstanding senior theses. Students are nominated by their advisors, and all nominees are invited to submit their papers for publication in the *UGA Journal of Economics*. *If you hope to be a contender this year, you should plan on submitting all your assignments on the stated due date.*

PLAGIARISM
Plagiarism means presenting someone else's work as your own. Types of cheating range from not citing sources properly to submitting an entire paper written by someone else. Penalties may include an F in the course and suspension from the university. According to the University Honor Code & Academic Policy, "*As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, 'A Culture of Honesty,' and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in 'A Culture of Honesty' found at www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.*"

INCOMPLETES
This grade will be assigned only in accordance with University policy, which states that an "I" grade may be given only when "a student was doing satisfactory work but, for non-academic reasons beyond his/her control, was unable to meet the full requirements of the course." The policy also states that "[a]n Incomplete should not ordinarily be given unless the student has completed a substantial part of the course."