

HONORS THESES IN ECONOMICS THROUGH THE CLAS

INTRODUCTION: This document describes what is involved in doing an honors thesis in Economics through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Any questions should be directed to:

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GPA AND SENIOR STATUS REQUIREMENTS: Students graduating Magna Cum Laude in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences must have a 3.3 GPA in economics courses and a 3.5 GPA in junior/senior courses and must enroll in ECO 4935 or ECO 4905. The honors thesis must be approved by the department's undergraduate committee. For Summa Cum Laude, students must satisfy the requirements for Magna Cum Laude, earn a 3.5 GPA in economics courses, and earn a 3.7 GPA in junior/senior courses.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR THESIS: Students are expected to use regression analysis to test various hypotheses based in economic theory about the determinants of some phenomenon. The list of potential topics is almost endless, but it may be particularly enjoyable to use economics to analyze a topic that has intrigued you. Some theses that have earned Magna or Summa Cum Laude in Economics through the College of Business Administration or through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences follow:

The determinants of changes over time in housing prices in Gainesville
The determinants of variation over time in air quality in Tampa
The determinants of changes over time in taxable sales in Florida
The determinants of changes over time in voter turnout in Florida
The determinants of changes over time in property crime rates in Florida
Factors affecting how Florida legislators voted on a bill to allow hotel taxes to fund stadiums
The determinants of changes over time in the real cost of physician visits
The determinants of changes over time in the real cost of college tuition
The determinants of changes over time in the U.S. divorce rate
The effect of university research on the scientific composition of the workforce in metro areas
The determinants of team baseball salaries and of success in winning games
The factors affecting how state legislatures voted on the Equal Rights Amendment
The determinants of differences among the states in average SAT scores
The role of racial differences in expenditures on education in Southern states in explaining subsequent racial differences in earnings (published in *Southern Economic Journal*)
The determinants of male-female salary differentials in Japan
The determinants of how U.S. House members voted on the 1970 Clean Air Act
The effect of national compulsory health insurance on mortality over time and across countries

Once you have settled on a preliminary topic, you should develop hypotheses you wish to test and then ascertain whether the project is feasible; that is, are the data that are required to test your key hypotheses available? Next you should determine which data you will utilize to test your hypotheses and begin to gather the data. You will get feedback on your proposed thesis when you **present your research proposal in the fourth week** of the semester to the department's undergraduate committee. After the data are assembled, run the regressions testing your hypotheses. The honors thesis should describe the phenomenon being studied and why it is of interest, develop the hypotheses that are tested, indicate how the data were gathered and manipulated, describe in detail whether each hypothesis is supported by the statistical results, and summarize in the conclusion what has been learned from the empirical analysis. [Note that statistical analysis rarely provides support for all of the hypotheses being tested.] Since completing all this work in a semester can be a strenuous task, a number of students choose to devote two semesters to the project, often taking the Empirical Research in Economics Seminar (ECO 4935) in the fall if offered (see below).

FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Each honors thesis is supervised by an economics faculty member. Theses originating in the Empirical Research in Economics Seminar are supervised by that class's instructor. Students not taking ECO 4935 must find some faculty member who is willing to supervise your thesis on a topic that is agreeable to both of you. If you are having trouble finding someone to work with, see Professor Kenny.

SIGNING UP FOR THE THESIS: Students can sign up for an Honors Thesis in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences by enrolling in Empirical Research in Economics Seminar (ECO 4935) or in Individual Work (ECO 4905). The ECO 4905 credits count as free electives only. The approval form for ECO 4905, which requires the signatures of the faculty supervisor and the Department chair, can be obtained in the Economics Department office.

TURNING IN THE THESIS: The front page of the thesis must be the Honors Thesis Submission Form, which can be downloaded from the honors webpage, www.honors.ufl.edu, under the Upper Division link. Five copies of the thesis must be turned in to Professor Kenny two weeks before the last day of classes. The department's undergraduate committee will determine whether the thesis is satisfactory. Professor Kenny will turn in a copy of the thesis and abstract to the Honors Office.

RELATED COURSES: You are strongly encouraged to take the Empirical Research in Economics Seminar (ECO 4935) if offered, which develops empirical skills. The empirical paper required for this Fall course can be developed into a thesis in the Spring (or in the Fall if necessary). Another useful course is Public Choice, which assigns a number of empirical articles to read and requires some data analysis.