University of Toronto
ECO 499H1Y 2021-2022
Honours essay in applied microeconomics
Classes: W9-12, room XX
Instructor: Aloysius Siow
Individual consultations, office hours by arrangement.

The goal of the course is for each student or a team of two students to write an original essay in applied microeconomics, which includes both an analytic framework and original data analysis. The end product is a paper and a formal presentation of the paper. There will be assignments along the way to provide tools for students to write the paper. There will also be intermediate targets towards writing the paper. Paper should be double space. Cover page, tables, figures and references do not count for page length. 50% of the final grade will be based on your paper. 30% of the marks for each writing assignment will be awarded for presentation, grammar and good writing.

Classes will be used for you to present your work in progress and for your classmates to give you constructive feedback. As such, class attendance is mandatory. 50% of your grade will be based on class participation.

Each paper must be supervised by a professor.

You can choose to write by yourself or with one co-author. You are encouraged to work with a co-author. There is no penalty for working with a co-author.

In the first two years of this course, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, Minnie Chu's and Rida Aamer's papers won the Canadian Economic Association best undergraduate paper award in their respective years. Two papers were presented at the 2020 CEA summer conference meetings.

Link for class:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/j526faov9ndzcxx/AABjA8pU60ifZ5RHo1-OBXPta?dl=0
Link for sign-up for individual consultation:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12_jRlO1OFyjWNArovf0w1GvCD8TunYcpcmAthKZJrrY/edit#gid=0

Prerequisite:
ECO200Y1/ ECO204Y1/ ECO206Y1; ECO202Y1/ ECO208Y1/ ECO209Y1;
ECO220Y1/ ECO227Y1/ (STA220H1, STA255H1)/ (STA237H1, STA238H1)/ (STA257H1, STA261H1);
ECO372H1/ ECO374H1/ ECO375H1; 3.0 GPA in economics courses; approval of the Associate Chair, Undergraduate

Recommended Preparation:
ECO374H1/ECO375H1 and ECO372H1

The recommended statistical package is STATA. You can and may need to use other programming tools such as R, python, etc.. The class will not support these other tools.
Learn LATEX for technical word processing. This package, which is hard to use initially, is the most flexible for including graphs, tables, equations, etc.. There are many versions, most of which are free.

Class schedule:

Sep 15: First class. Introduction by professor.

Sept 22: (Single authored) Individual consultation with professor on a summary of one of your professor's empirical paper. Pick a paper and tell me what it is about and why you find the paper interesting.

Sept 29. (10%) 20 minutes presentation of a summary of one of your professor's paper.

(Single authored) A summary of one of your professor's paper. No equation. Tables and graphs are fine. 3-5 pages total, all content included. Work with your professor.

Use slides for your presentation. No more than 10 slides.

Write the paper and slides with a "reader" in mind. You can choose from one of two:

(a) A classmate in economics. I.e. explain the paper to a classmate who has not read the paper. Why the paper is interesting to you. Your goal is to convince the classmate to read the paper.
(b) Your classmate, parent or sibling who is not an economics major. The goal is to show that economics has insightful things to convey to non-economists. So you need to avoid jargon.

Oct 6 Continuation of presentation.

Oct 13. (10%) (single authored) 12 minutes presentation of a review of two papers in a narrow area of economics. This should be related to your assignment for November 18 and intended paper.
6 pages. One page should be devoted to why the topic is interesting. One page on what are the main hypotheses? 2 pages on what kind of data are used in the papers? 2 pages on what are the results and are the results convincing?

Oct 20 Continuation of presentations.

Oct 27. (10%, single authored) Presentation of empirical replication study. Choose a published paper which has deposited their data on the web. Replicate the first two tables of the paper. One table must be the summary statistics and one table should be some regression results. Slides only.

The objective here is to learn how to do empirical work by replicating someone else's work. This is hard work. You need to get started early.
Nov 3 Continuation of presentations.

Nov 17. Single or join authored. 12 minutes each. Presentation of idea for paper. What is the question? Why is it interesting? What is the data?

Nov 24. (10%, single or joint) Present the theoretical framework for your paper.

1. What is the question?
2. What are the objectives of the players/stakeholders/agents?
3. What are the constraints (money/time/information, etc.) of each player?
4. What are the predictions (observable comparative statics and equilibrium outcomes) of the model?
5. Describe the data and how you will test your predictions.

Dec 1. Continuation of presentations.

Jan 5. Individual consultation with students.

Jan 12. Individual consultation with students.

Jan 19. (10%) (At most 2 co-authors) Presentation of 1st progress report for paper with slides.

Jan 26. Continuation of presentations.

Feb 2. Individual consultation with students.

Feb 9. Individual consultation with students.

Feb 16. (10%) 2nd progress report for paper. Slides must be submitted.

Mar 2. Continuation of presentations.

Mar 9. Individual consultation with students.

Mar 16. Individual consultation with students.

Mar 23. (10%) Final presentations for paper.

Mar 30. Continuation of presentations.

Papers (30%) must be submitted no later than April 15.