Honors Seminar: Introduction to Research in Economics

New York University       Instructor: Ricardo Lagos
Spring 2010       19 W. 4th St. (office 711)
Mondays 3:30-6:10pm     Office hrs: Mo 6:10-7:10pm
Building XX

Objectives. The goal of the seminar is to introduce students to doing economic research. Specifically, you will be guided along the process of researching the literature on a specific topic (e.g., reading academic research papers, summarizing the relevant literature analytically), posing a well-defined research question, and answering it in the form of a research paper.

The course is not designed to teach you empirical or theoretical tools. Rather, the idea is to help you apply the tools that you already have (e.g., your knowledge of micro, macro, or econometrics) and develop the skills necessary to come up with a well-posed research topic, develop a framework to analyze the question and/or bring data to bear to support or counter your hypothesis.

In this seminar you will have the opportunity to experience how academic economists approach research questions, what they consider acceptable explanations for an economic phenomenon, and how they interact data with mathematical models to analyze alternative explanations.

Pre-requisites. Success in this course will require you to have a solid background in intermediate Microeconomics, intermediate Macroeconomics, and basic Statistics. It is also important that you are independent, self-disciplined, and motivated enough to see a paper through.

Assessment. Your final grade will be composed as follows:

- 50% A final research paper
- 25% In-class presentation of your research and results
- 25% Degree of involvement throughout the course.
  For your involvement to be satisfactory, you will have to:
  1. Attend class
  2. Comply with the reading assignments
  3. Present your work-in-progress in class regularly
  4. Meet all deadlines.

Due date. You will be expected to hand in the final research paper no later than May 10, 2011. You should plan ahead and administrate your time wisely throughout the semester: There will be no extensions; no exceptions. If you fail to hand in the paper by the due date, you will not pass the course at the end of the semester.
**Incompletes.** The grade of “I” (Incomplete) is a temporary grade that indicates that the student has, due to a serious unforeseen emergency, not completed all of the course work but that there is the possibility that the student will eventually pass the course when all of the requirements have been completed. The incomplete grade is not awarded automatically: Be advised that if you do not comply with the deadline, you do not get the automatic right to an “Incomplete.” A student must formally request in writing for a grade of “I”, present documented evidence of illness or the equivalent problem, and clarify the remaining course requirements with the instructor. The Economics Department does not grant an “Incomplete” except in cases of genuine emergency. If the course work is not completed after the statutory time for making up incompletes has elapsed, the temporary grade of “I” shall become an “F” and will be computed in your grade point average.

**Theme.** The general unifying theme of the seminar will be the recent financial crisis. The range of topics within this theme is vast enough to accommodate a wide variety of interests in macroeconomics, microeconomics, finance, and monetary economics.

**Readings.** There will be no textbook. The readings will range from academic research papers to news articles.

**Presentations.** For the first two or three classes, I will assign in advance some background readings that we will discuss in class. From the beginning of February onwards, you will have to present your work-in-progress (e.g., a weekly reading chosen by you) every week, or every other week. The purpose of these in-class discussions and presentations will be to help you come up with, develop, and sharpen a research idea for your paper. You will also have to give a longer presentation of your complete research in late April. There is a projector built into the room in case you want to use it for your presentations. There is no computer in the classroom, but you can either bring your own, or borrow a laptop yourself from Silver Center lower level 7A.

**Website.** I will set up a website for us to share reading material.