

ECO 3941 Honors Advanced Research & Writing Methods in Business & Economics - I

Number of Credit Hours: 2

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Office Hours: T/R 11am-12pm and 2-3:30pm

Term: Fall 2020

Class Meeting Days: W

Class Meeting Hours: 6:00-7:50pm

Class Location: HA102

Lab Location:

II. Course Prerequisites/Co-requisites: Junior or senior status

V. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to give Honors College concentrators in economics and business the practical skills they need to develop an original research project in economics or business. Students will learn both the structure of research reports and the process of conducting professional-level research. Writing technique is also emphasized in this course.

This course is taken for credit in the junior year and its sister course is taken for credit in the senior year. It is designed to improve a student's ability to identify specific research problems, provide potential solutions, and communicate this progress in written and oral forms. One overriding rationale for this class is to force students to read and evaluate others' research work. Doing this necessarily compels students to "communicate" with others about their writing, which is all-too-often non-existent without this compulsion. It forces each student to think about others' problems, shortcomings and effectiveness of communication in a way that encourages students to think about their own work and progress differently. Increased self-reflection in this manner is therefore a key goal of this class and one that can only improve one's own writing and research.

There are a number of ways to conduct a writing course, including, among others, focusing on grammar and sentence construction, or on the creative aspect. This class will not explicitly teach how to write good sentences and paragraphs, since I will assume you have had (or will have) plenty of opportunities in the Honors Program to get training and feedback on these aspects of the writing process. However, you are highly likely to improve this aspect of your writing with the "generous" amount of feedback you'll be receiving from your classmates (and me!). The course is designed to concentrate on writing in the context of the research process. As a result, we will be reading, discussing, and doing exercises with the aim of better understanding the nuts-and-bolts of the research and writing *process*.

A key objective is to demystify the research/thesis process, as it is typically a mystery to the uninitiated. My aim is for each student to learn exactly how to go about starting and finishing any research project that might be assigned to him or her, either in an academic setting or a professional one. There really are (often overlooked) devices and insights that can help structure the research process and your writing; these devices can make all the difference in a project, not just for quality's sake, but even in completing the project at all. Anyone who has done much research has seen many very smart people who couldn't get out of first gear with their own research because they hadn't internalized some of these simple skills. Some of these skills include:

- formulating a “researchable” topic or question
- writing up a proposal on a planned topic, and
- learning to separate *brainstorming* from *organizing ideas* from *writing first drafts* to *completing final drafts*
- organizing your work in the form of an outline
- gaining experience in reading and critiquing others’ writing, and similarly
- learning how to receive feedback and criticism on your writing from others.

Your Responsibility for Remedial Writing Issues

This class is not designed to teach you the basics of writing and grammar. We simply do not have the time to do this. As such, you are responsible for making the effort to overcome any writing deficiencies you have. In particular, you should make use of the [University’s Writing Center](#) for help with basic writing problems. If I specifically mention you need to visit the Writing Center in my comments, doing so will form part of your grade for the next round of revisions. There are other writing resources *any* writer should make use of, such as the [Sheridan Baker book](#) mentioned in the “supplemental material” section. Given one of the primary themes of this class, I also strongly suggest you get other peers to read and critically comment on your work before you submit it.

VI. COURSE OBJECTIVES

In sum, this class is designed to:

- Help you overcome the difficulties experienced in your research by encouraging you to communicate with other economics/social science students.
- Offer you a large amount of feedback on your project/writing beyond that which your direct supervisor can provide.
- Improve your written and oral presentation skills in the most timely and effective manner.
- Vastly improve the research outcome.

More specifically, this course is designed to improve students’ competence in:

- Developing a clear “claim” or “hypothesis” that will serve to anchor any research paper
- Reviewing the literature relevant to your project
- Designing an investigation; and gathering and analyzing data/information
- Presenting information in a manner consistent with publication in the relevant discipline
- Critical appraisal of your own work relative to that of others

Note on Honors Distinction

This Honors course differs substantially from a non-Honors course in that its primary aim is to prepare students to formulate and complete a substantive research project in their fields. Ultimately, it will prepare students for the daunting task of writing an original honors thesis in economics or business, which is a 40-plus-page work of independent and original research. As an indication of the high level of expectation for success in the thesis, students read and summarize in writing *The Craft of Research*, a guide to research and writing in the social sciences, which is directed primarily to graduate research students.

VII. GRADES

<u>Cutoff</u>	<u>Cutoff</u>	<u>Cutoff</u>	<u>Cutoff</u>	<u>Cutoff</u>
A 93%	B+ 87%	C+ 77%	D+ 67%	F <60%
A- 90%	B 83%	C 73%	D 63%	
	B- 80%	C- 70%	D- 60%	

Tentative Schedule & Assessments

Task (with percentage of overall mark)

September

- (2%) Booth et al. #1: chapter summaries: Prologue I, 1,2,16,17 (end of August)
- (2%) Booth et al. #2: summaries: Prologue II, chaps 3-6 (first week of Sept)
 - Juniors submit Booth et al. chapter summaries
 - Seniors critique summaries
- (12.5%) Submit a research topic (preliminary introduction/proposal) with a clear research claim i.e., statement of problem & response (one-page max!)
- (7.5%) Main critique of one other student's research (see above)

October

- (2%) Booth et al. #3: chapter summaries: Prologue III & IV, 7,8,12,13 (end of Sept)
- (2%) Booth et al. #4: summaries: chaps 9-11 (first week of Oct)
 - Juniors submit Booth et al. chapter summaries
 - Seniors critique summaries
- (12.5%) Taking comments from previous month's submission into account, submit two-page (max!) Intro/Proposal for your research project paying close attention to your claim
- (7.5%) Main critique of one other student's two-page proposal (plus lit review)

November

- (2%) Booth et al. #5: chapter summaries: 14,15, & Ethics of Research (end of Oct)
 - Juniors submit Booth et al. chapter summaries
 - Seniors critique summaries
- (12.5%) Taking comments from previous month's submission into account, revise your introduction/proposal (3 page max), paying close attention to your claim; literature review must be organized around ideas and not authors; you must also submit an outline for your entire project

- (7.5%) Main critique of one other student’s research proposal, lit review and outline

December

- (12.5%) Taking comments from previous month’s submission into account, submit a revised and well-formatted document (3 page max for Intro/Proposal; 5 page max for literature review), paying close attention to your claim and the organization of your argument; in addition to revising your paper and outline, you must submit a one-paragraph abstract
- (7.5%) Main critique of one other student’s research document

Throughout the Semester

- (10%) Participate in discussion/prepare comments on all others’ documents (even when you are not specifically assigned as the principal reviewer)

IX. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND LATE POLICY

If there are special health or other personal crises affecting your attendance or performance during the semester, you may request special arrangements with supporting documentation. I strongly urge students to see me as soon as possible under such circumstances. Unless there is a prior arrangement (with documentation), I will not accept anything late.

X. SPECIAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Written Submissions

Each student needs to be aware that his or her writing assignments will be read by the others in the class. A large part of your grade for this component will be based on:

- how well you conform to the specific assignment;
- how well your submission is articulated in terms of good standards for academic writing (i.e., is it grammatically correct, well organized, free from typos, and are references and citations done correctly, etc.);
- how much improvement you have made since the last submission (i.e., have you taken all relevant critiques into account?).

Evaluation of Others’ Submissions

As should be evident from the weighting of the grades, a significant component of your mark will depend on your evaluations of others’ work. Indeed, the overriding rationale for a class like this is to force students to read each other’s work. Doing this necessarily compels each writer to interact with others over his or her thesis project in ways that are unlikely without it. Also, it forces each student to think about others’ problems and shortcomings in a way that forces the writer to think about his or her own work differently. Increased “self-reflection” in this manner is a key goal of this class and one that can only improve your own writing and research. Your evaluations will take the form of written comments on others and your oral arguments during the meetings. Make sure you read the “Critiquing Suggestions” on the sidebar on the course website.

Chapter Summaries (Booth et al.)

For the first-time juniors, I will assign specific chapters of the Booth et al. book. This book is the best resource I've come across in my years trying to teach this process: it is imperative you read it as soon as possible in the semester. To that end, you'll submit brief written summaries of the chapters at various intervals through the semester so we can complete the book by mid-October or so. You will need to summarize each chapter assigned and raise any relevant points you found of interest. This is essentially a task to work on your basic writing skills and to prove you've read the material. Write ups need to be typed and they will be emailed to me (and your reviewer/critique) by the deadline on the assigned date.

The second-time students (seniors) will critique the summaries written by the juniors. Their critiques will count toward this portion of the grade.

Class Participation

A significant portion of your overall mark will be allocated to your (positive!) contribution to class meetings/discussion. Positive class participation means coming to class prepared to seriously engage with your fellow students' works. Part of this participation grade will be your written comments/critiques on *all the other papers* in the group in which you are not specifically assigned as the principal reviewer.

The "seminar" nature of this class requires that each student come prepared to discuss each of the papers for each of the classes. I therefore reserve the right to call on a student and ask for his or her evaluation of specific papers at any time.

Needless to say, you must attend class in order to participate. Furthermore...

- leaving early, consistently coming late, or leaving the classroom in the middle of class (except in case of genuine emergency)...
- ringing cell phones (don't bring your cell phone to class—or, at least, make sure you turn them off!)...or
- failure to bring the appropriate materials to class ...

will be grounds to lower your mark.

You are responsible for checking the course schedule frequently and for keeping up to date on what reading and other work is required for class meetings. All reading and other work assigned for a given date must be completed prior to the class meeting on that date.

XII. TEXT AND REFERENCES

REQUIRED TEXT:

[Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research* \(3rd ed.\). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. \(later editions are fine.\)](#)

ASSIGNED READINGS:

I reserve the right to occasionally add readings during the course of the term. Please [read the following excerpt from Joli Jensen's Write No Matter What](#) , U Chicago Press (2017). [[book can be found here](#)].

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

[Baker, Sheridan. 1997. *The Practical Stylist: With Readings and Handbook*. New York: Longman.](#)

XIV. ATTENDANCE

Here is the University's position on attendance:

Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance.

Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

XV. POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses — Boca Raton, SU 131 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 131 (954-236-1222); in Jupiter and all Northern Campuses, SR 111F (561-799-8585). Disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.

XVI. COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS) CENTER

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>

XVII. CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY STATEMENT

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded

in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001 at <http://www.fau.edu/honors/academics/honor-code.php>. and the Wilkes Honors College Academic Honor Code at <http://www.fau.edu/honors/academics/honor-code.php>”