

Description of Independent Senior Seminar (Econ 485)

Outstanding students in economics may complete an intensive independent research project in their senior year. The project culminates in a written thesis and a public presentation of their research. Students are expected to develop an independent research proposal for submission to the Department of Economics and Management. The department will review proposals and assign a faculty member to direct each project that is approved. Thesis proposals must be approved by the department before a student can register for Econ 485.

Econ 485 is a course designed for rigorous research on a single topic over a course of a single semester or alternatively over the course of two consecutive semesters. In the latter case, the course credit will be divided equally between the two semesters, to total 1.0 credit. This course can be taken either in addition to or as an alternative to Econ 480, the regular senior seminar in economics. It is unlikely that this course will carry an S designation and students should make arrangements to fulfill their S requirement in another course. Passing the senior comprehensive exam is a component of the senior capstone requirement for all economics majors, whether they take Econ 480, Econ 485, or both. The senior comprehensive exam is designed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and counts 25% towards the seminar grade. Students who take Econ 485 across two semesters will receive a grade of L at the end of the first semester and will not receive a final grade until after the grade for the comprehensive exam is assigned by the department.

Who Should Apply to Take This Course?

You may want to consider applying to write an independent senior thesis if:

- ✓ You have significant interest, knowledge, and academic preparation for the proposed research topic.
- ✓ You are willing to work diligently and persistently for a long period of time on a single, complex topic.
- ✓ You anticipate considerable benefits from taking this course.

Application Timeline and Deadlines

For students expecting to graduate in May:

Students expecting to graduate in May should submit the thesis proposal to the department office assistant in 210 Harrison Hall by 4:00 p.m. on the Friday before spring break of their junior year. The department will review proposals and notify students of results by the end of spring semester. Students intending to take seminar in the fall should register for Econ 480 and can switch to Econ 485 if approved for independent research. Contact the department chair if you have questions about the application process.

For students expecting to graduate in December:

The typical process for crafting an independent thesis proposal is outlined in the table below. The table assumes graduation in May of the student's senior year. Students who have declared their intent to graduate early (i.e., in December of their senior year) are also required to submit the thesis proposal by the date shown above.

Fall semester, junior year	Approach a department faculty member to begin exploring the possibility of an independent seminar thesis.
Winter term and beginning of spring semester, junior year	Continue refining topic and begin <i>drafting</i> the proposal.
Before spring break in March, junior year	Complete independent senior seminar application form and proposal. Submit to department office assistant by 4:00 p.m.
Registration for senior year	If accepted, register for Econ 485. If not, register for Econ 480. Contact assigned thesis advisor to begin planning your research in earnest. This could include work over the summer.

Independent Senior Seminar (Econ 485) Application Form

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Graduation Month/Year _____ Major Advisor _____

Proposed Topic Title _____

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1. Briefly describe your topic and methods. (150 words)
2. List courses, academic papers, or internships you have completed that are relevant to your topic.
3. List names of faculty members with whom you have conferred about the project.
4. Attach a short statement describing: 1) your reasons and motivation for choosing this research topic, and 2) the benefits you hope to reap from Econ 485: Independent Senior Seminar. (300 words)
5. Attach a detailed description of your proposed topic. Explain the main idea research question, methods, resources, and sources of data that you will use for this project. (3-5 double-spaced pages, or 750-1250 words)