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**University of Alberta – Department of Economics – Winter 2011**  
**ECON 900 – Directed Research Project – BI – Marchand**

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

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Website

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~jmarchan/teaching.htm>

Coordinator

Joseph Marchand  
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Office

T 7-29: (by appt.)  
(e-mail me for appt.)

Description

This course consists of an independent research project undertaken by students enrolled in either of the two course-based Masters programs in the Department of Economics. The work is carried out under the guidance of a supervisor and the coordinator. Except in unusual circumstances, only one supervisor is permitted. (A list of potential supervisors from the Department of Economics for 2010/2011 can be found at the end of this document.)

Requirements

The course requires students to undertake the following activities:

1. Select a topic for research, find a supervisor, and begin preliminary work on the project;
2. Carry out work on the project and write a paper that is recommended by the supervisor for submission to the ECON 900 coordinator;
3. Submit the paper to the coordinator (and 'revise and re-submit' if instructed to do so by the coordinator);
4. Upon the recommendation of the coordinator, submit the paper to a second reader (chosen by the coordinator);
5. Deliver an oral presentation to the examiners: the supervisor, a second reader, and the coordinator;
6. Revise the paper as instructed by the examiners;
7. Submit a final version of the paper to the Graduate Program Administrator.

General Information

- (1) For administrative purposes, ECON 900 is considered the same as other scheduled courses. Therefore, the regulations for scheduled courses set out in the Calendar also apply to ECON 900. Two relevant procedures normally followed by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) should be noted:

- (i) Students not completing the course requirements in the term of registration can be assigned a grade of incomplete (IN) with a specified date (an extension) by which the course requirements must be met. Normally, upon request by the Department, FGSR will approve an extension of four months beyond the end of the term in which the student is registered in ECON 900. For example, the time limits on extensions normally allowed by FGSR are 30 April for registration in Fall Term and 31 August for registration in Winter Term. Please note that Spring and Summer terms are shorter than Fall and Winter terms.
  - (ii) Students are not normally permitted more than two registrations in ECON 900. Therefore, students should not re-register in ECON 900 unless they can be sure of completing the course requirements within the extension allowed by a second registration. Students not registering in other courses can keep their program active by registering in M REG 800 – Maintenance of Registration. See Section 203.3.1 of the 2010/2011 University of Alberta Calendar:  
(<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/GradStudies-and-Research/Regulations/203.3.html>).
- (2) Students must familiarize themselves with the Code of Student Behaviour. See the link provided in Section 25 of the 2010/2011 University of Alberta Calendar (<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Code-Student-Behavior/25.html>).
- (3) All students are required to submit a signed Academic Integrity Checklist (attached as the final page of the course outline) along with any drafts of their projects that are submitted to the Econ 900 coordinator. Any evidence of plagiarism in a paper, including those at the draft stage, will be dealt with according to official university rules. For helpful suggestions on how to avoid plagiarism in your paper please see:  
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/pdfs/10Ways.pdf>.

### Topic and Supervisor

When selecting a topic and a supervisor, students must take the following into account:

- Students in the MA in Economics program must choose an economics topic such that the supervisor is (or the second reader can be) a faculty member in the Department of Economics.
- Students in the MA in Economics and Finance program should note the following motion passed by the Department Council on 25 September 2002:  
*For the ECON 900 project in the Master's in Economics and Finance Program, either the supervisor or the second reader must be from the Department of Economics.*

*If a student chooses a finance topic, then either the supervisor or the second reader should come from the Department of Finance and Management Science. The second reader is chosen by the ECON 900 Coordinator who, for the purpose of choosing a second reader, will determine if the topic is a Finance topic.*

- Subject to the above limitation, students are free to choose the topic for the project. Students should discuss their chosen topic with a potential supervisor. Students without a particular topic in mind may approach faculty members for suggestions on topics they would be willing to supervise. The coordinator can provide information on the research interests of faculty members and may be able to suggest a suitable supervisor for a particular topic.
  
- Students are responsible for obtaining the agreement of a faculty member to act as a supervisor. Note that faculty members have no obligation to act as supervisors beyond June 30. Therefore, to ensure the participation of the supervisor beyond this date, students should make appropriate arrangements with the faculty member concerned. Students should also ask the supervisor about any planned absences or periods of unavailability during the period of supervision.

### The Paper

The paper must contain the following pages, presented in the order below.

- (a) Title page. (Attached at the back of the document. Also available in Word.)
- (b) Release form. (Attached at the back of the document. Also available in Word.)
- (c) Approval form. (Attached at the back of the document. Also available in Word.)
- (d) Abstract. (This page must have the title Abstract. The text of the abstract must follow the instructions in the Format of Text given below and should not exceed 200 words.)
- (e) Acknowledgements (if any). (This page must have the title Acknowledgements and the text must follow the instructions in the Format of Text given below. As a matter of courtesy, the supervisor should be appropriately thanked.)
- (f) Table of Contents. (This page must have the title Table of Contents followed by a list which mentions (i) the section (and subsection) numbers with associated titles as used in the text of the paper; (ii) any appendices (if present in the paper); and (iii) references.)
- (g) Text of the paper. (The text must follow the instructions in the Format of Text given below and should normally not exceed 50 typed pages.)
- (h) Appendices (if applicable). ( Any appendices must follow the instructions in the Format of Appendix given below. Empirical projects must include an appendix indicating the data sources used, variable definitions, etc.)
- (i) References. (The list of references must follow the instructions in the Format of List of References given below.)

Students must submit one copy of the draft version of the paper (that has been approved for submission by the supervisor) to the ECON 900 coordinator at least 5 (five) weeks (in general) before the appropriate deadline. The draft version of the paper must be accompanied by a note from the Supervisor recommending that the student proceed to examination. The deadlines for Departments to submit all the necessary forms for convocation is two weeks before the date of convocation. Therefore students wishing to graduate at a particular convocations should budget 7 (seven) weeks from the time they submit a good quality first version of the paper.

The ECON 900 Coordinator will attempt to read the draft paper as soon as possible. Papers will be read on a first-come, first-served basis. Students must ensure that the paper is free of grammatical and typographical errors before submitting it to the coordinator. Any paper containing too many errors (as determined by the Coordinator) will be returned for corrections thereby delaying the process. If the Coordinator is satisfied that the paper is ready, a Second Reader will be appointed and an examination will be set.

#### Oral Examination

A student will be allowed up to 20 minutes to deliver an oral presentation based on the paper to the examiners. The use of aids such as PowerPoint presentations or overhead transparencies is permitted, but a student should not read word-for-word from a prepared text. After the presentation, the examiners will normally ask questions to be answered by the student. The examiners will then discuss the paper after the student has left the room. The examination may have one of three outcomes: (i) pass without revisions; (ii) minor revisions required; (iii) major revisions and re-examination required.

#### Final Version of the Paper

Students must submit one copy of the final version of the paper as soon as possible after the Oral Examination. To ensure graduation at a particular convocation, the Coordinator should receive the final version at least one week before the last day for the Department to submit a Report of Completion for Course-Based Master's Degrees to FGSR, as stated in the Academic Schedule.

The Coordinator will ensure that the final version is acceptable to the examiners before submitting the necessary paperwork to indicate that the student has completed the requirements for the completion of ECON 900. The Coordinator will contact the student if any examiner finds the final version to be unsatisfactory.

### General Format of Submissions

- Unless stated otherwise, all submissions must be typed on one side of good-quality 8 ½ x 11 sheets of white paper.
- The margins of each of the four sides of a page must be at least one inch.
- The font used must be at least as large as that of a 12-point font.
- Pages should be numbered consecutively starting with the first page of the text of the paper.
- References cited in the paper must follow the format used by the *Canadian Journal of Economics*.

### Format of Text

In addition to the instructions provided above in General Format of Submissions:

- All text must be typed with double-spaced lines.
- Each section (and subsection) should begin with an appropriate number followed by brief title.
- The first section must begin on a new page. Subsequent sections and subsections do not have to begin on a new page.

### Format of Appendix

In addition to the instructions provided above in General Format of Submissions:

- Each appendix must begin on a new page.
- If there is more than one appendix, each should be given a numbered title such as Appendix I.
- All text in an appendix must be typed with double-spaced lines.
- An appendix must only contain material referred to in the paper. Such material may include proofs and other results obtained, which are mentioned but not discussed in detail in the text of the paper.
- Empirical papers must include an appendix indicating data sources, variable definitions, etc.

### Format of References

In addition to the instructions provided above in General Format of Submissions:

- The list of references must begin on a new page with the title References.
- Each reference must be typed with single-spaced lines, with double spacing between references.

- References must be presented in alphabetical order.
- References must follow the format used by the Canadian Journal of Economics.
- The list of references must include all (and only) works cited in the paper.

#### Other Formats

In addition to the instructions provided above in General Format of Submissions:

- Footnotes must be numbered consecutively and should appear at the bottom of the relevant page, typed with single-spaced lines. Footnotes should be brief and kept to a minimum.
- Tables should be numbered consecutively and either appear as close as possible to their discussion in the text or be placed in an appendix. Each table should have a brief descriptive title.
- Figures (i.e., diagrams and graphs) should be numbered consecutively and either appear as close as possible to their discussion in the text or be placed in an appendix. Each figure should have a brief descriptive title.
- Equations should be numbered. The number should be enclosed in parentheses and placed flush right.

#### Helpful Hints for the Successful Completion of ECON 900

1. Immediately begin serious work on the project and allocate at least the same amount of time to ECON 900 as that normally devoted to a course with 3 units of course weight.
2. When selecting a topic and supervisor, the preliminary work should include a thorough search of the literature using sources such as the Journal of Economic Literature and EconLit (which can be accessed via the U of A Library website). For an empirical project, check for the availability of relevant data through online databases or the U of A Data Library. This preliminary work should help you to identify potential problems that you may face as well as provide you with an indication of the feasibility of your chosen topic.
3. For an empirical project, select or develop an appropriate theoretical model that can be used to set up an econometric model with estimable parameters and testable hypotheses. Carefully consider the methods of estimation and types of tests that will be required for your project, as you will have to carry out all of the necessary computations.
4. For a non-empirical project, the problem must be well-defined and such that you can derive some interesting results or provide a novel synthesis of existing knowledge.

5. Critically evaluate your own strengths and background. Do not pick a topic that requires you to use advanced techniques that are beyond the scope of those covered in the MA program, unless you are willing and able to learn these on your own.
6. Seek the advice of your supervisor whenever necessary as well as that of the coordinator. Regular consultation with your supervisor typically leads to a better first version of the paper.
7. Normally, the paper should be structured as a typical journal article:
  - The first section should be an introduction that discusses and motivates the topic of the paper. The final paragraph of the first section should state the plan of the paper.
  - A literature review should be included either as part of the first section or as a separate second section. (A literature review with no new theoretical or empirical results provided by you is not acceptable as an ECON 900 project.)
  - The next section should formally state the problem to be investigated in your project, with references to available results in the literature.
  - Your results should be presented and discussed in one or more separate sections.
  - The final section should be a conclusion that briefly states your main results, notes the major limitations of your analysis, and suggests possible extensions.
8. Use consistent notation throughout the paper and adhere to conventional notation as far as possible.

#### University Policies

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behavior ([www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm)) and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and may result in suspension or expulsion from the University (GFC 29 SEP 2003).

Policy about course outlines can be found in §23.4(2) of the University Calendar (GFC 29 SEP 2003).