

**UC DAVIS**

AGRICULTURAL AND  
RESOURCE ECONOMICS

## **UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS COFFEE HOUR**



— Please join us —

**2:00–3:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday, December 1**

**DeLoach Conference Room, SS&H**

(Coffee and light refreshments provided)

**Meet the 2021–22  
Undergraduate Honors Thesis Students  
in Managerial Economics!**

For more information contact:  
Kristin Kiesel (thesis coordinator)  
e-mail: [kiesel@ucdavis.edu](mailto:kiesel@ucdavis.edu)  
Office: SSH 2147



## Rajvir Clair

### Thesis topic:

My research will examine the effectiveness of university policies used to mitigate student stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, I will assess the “pass/no pass” policy changes introduced in the spring 2020 quarter and the revisions that followed through the fall 2021 quarter. Using self-reported, mental health surveys, student demographics, and data regarding student behavior of the “pass/no pass” policy, I will run regression analyses to identify any significant co-occurrences within these factors. Further, I will control for student stressors such as anxieties related to health, feeling isolated, housing status, etc. Overall, my goal is to highlight the relationship between student mental health during COVID-19 and their choice of using the “pass/no pass” policy and thus, evaluating the success of the university’s response amidst the pandemic.

**Faculty Advisor: Kristin Kiesel and Jeffrey Williams**

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## Alexis Vivas Flores

### Thesis topic:

Throughout history, there has been a production gap between high- and low-income countries, and research spending could be a factor that contributes to this gap. I will examine research investment per crop in different countries, testing the hypothesis that research investment per crop is lower in poor and intermediate countries relative to high-income countries. This will be done in two steps, the first one is to look at the trends in research spending using data from the ASTI. The second is to compute the agricultural gap between regions and high-income countries. The goal of this paper is to gather more information and data on how much research spending there is per crop.

**Faculty Advisor: Ashish Shenoy**

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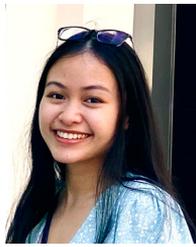


## Irene Kitamura

### Thesis topic:

I will be examining the First Time Homebuyer Credit (FTHC) during the Great Recession and identifying how it affected the housing market. The FTHC was intended to stimulate the struggling real estate market and to help individuals pay off their mortgages, thereby preventing defaults. To see if the FTCH had an effect on housing markets, I will analyze the change in Housing Price Index (HPIs) indexes, a proxy for foreclosure rates, for any obvious stabilization effect. I will then subset counties by differences in HPI revival and use linear analysis to identify what degree the FTHC is responsible for recovery. From here, I can correlate other factors of population, such as urbanity or demographics.

**Faculty Advisor: Tim Beatty**



## Natalie Huerta & Anh Le

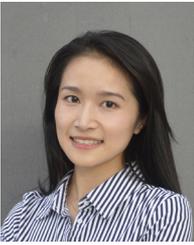
### Thesis topic:

We will analyze how information about sustainable production processes influences consumer demand for fruits and vegetables. Specifically, we will

look at consumers' preferences for different formats of information provision by analyzing their willingness to pay for a variety of sustainability labels currently being used in the marketplace, ranging from unregulated product claims to regulated and certified labels. We will analyze survey responses collected in collaboration with a prominent berry seller on consumers' perception and willingness to pay for different food labels associated with strawberries—including "USDA Organic," "Certified Naturally Grown," and "Zero Pesticides." The data will allow us to analyze how consumers respond to potentially competing sustainability claims, and whether their willingness to pay changes once they are provided with exact label definitions.

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**Faculty Advisor: Kristin Kiesel**



## Serena Leung

### Thesis topic:

Prop 47 is a sentencing reform measure in California that reclassifies certain theft and drug possession offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. Critics believe that Prop 47 has led to an increase in crime. I plan to examine the longer term effects of Prop 47 on crime, specifically larceny and motor vehicle thefts, by building upon findings from Charis Kubrin's paper "Can We Downsize Prison Without Compromising Public Safety?". In doing so, I intend to re-examine the original findings of this paper and their sensitivity to several modeling choices in the synthetic control design, such as the choice of donor pool control states, pre-treatment period to construct the counterfactual trend, and randomization inference procedures.

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**Faculty Advisor: Dalia Ghanem**



## Andrea Gomez Lloret

### Thesis topic:

Over the last decade, Electric Vehicles (EVs) have become more and more popular across the United States. The heightened environmental awareness as well as recent advancements in electric vehicle technology have resulted in upward trends in electric cars sales. However, the question still remains: How much are electric vehicles really helping the environment? My research aims to identify patterns in consumer behavior towards electric vehicles. By taking data from the National Household Travel Survey conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, the goal is to perform econometrics to make conclusions about correlations identified in the data, such as usage frequency, demographics of consumer, and comparisons between EVs and traditional cars.

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**Faculty Advisor: Aaron Smith**



## Huda Saleh

### Thesis topic:

You've probably heard of popular cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum and you may have even joined the hype and bought some. But what are the actual uses of cryptocurrencies, are they worth the hype, and could they actually replace our current national currencies or are they best used as an investment strategy? My research aims to answer these questions and more

through literature reviews, cost-benefit analysis, and comparisons between the percent change in the price of different currencies (national and crypto) using Excel.

**Faculty Advisor: Aaron Smith**

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## Hritvi Sheth

### Thesis topic:

As the world continues to transition into a more technologically dependent one, artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML) is being incorporated into more of the economy than we realize, including one of the biggest financial markets in the world—the forex market. However, the precision of AI/ML remains uncertain. This paper seeks to assess the accuracy of AI/ML algorithms'

projections of forex market prices, specifically the US Dollar. I will be constructing an Artificial Neural Network algorithm by identifying indicators and using historical data to measure its value when predicting exchange rates.

**Faculty Advisor: Colin Carter**

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## Priyal Thakral

### Thesis topic:

I will conduct a critical literature review about the impact of microfinance institutions and programs on poverty reduction, measured by household income and the empowerment of youth and women, in sub-Saharan Africa. I will begin by analyzing the current state of microfinance in different regions of Africa, then

I will review various studies, researching the backgrounds of the regions where the study was conducted, the research methodology used to collect data, the statistical methods used to interpret the data, as well as the results and their impacts for the future. I aim to look at studies across different regions of sub-Saharan Africa, so that I can compare the impacts of microfinance programs on poverty reductions from one region to another. I will analyze what factors may be contributing to the similarities and differences of the results in various regions. Lastly, I will also be discussing the methodical challenges of the studies that may effect the accuracy of the results and make generalizations across all regions of sub-Saharan Africa difficult. I will explore these challenges and analyze how they impact the results and the future implications of the studies.

**Faculty Advisor: Steve Boucher**

# Undergraduate Honors Thesis Program

The honors thesis program is designed to assist outstanding, committed and hard-working students majoring in Managerial Economics to think clearly and coherently about economic matters and to develop their analytical skills.

## *Learning objectives*

This program is especially effective for students who want to:

- Develop research, writing and presentation skills for work in a wide variety of business-related fields and careers
- Continue their studies at the graduate level

It gives students the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member over the course of two quarters and get involved in academic research.

## *Learning outcomes*

With the guidance of a faculty advisor, the student prepares an original, independent research paper (honors thesis, typically between 20 and 30 pages) which should be of sufficient quality and interest to present to an employer or a graduate school, and perhaps even be published in some form.

Participating students then present their results to a wider audience.

## *Prerequisites*

In order to apply to the program, interested students must meet the following requirements:

- Major in Managerial Economics
- Senior standing
- A minimum 3.5 GPA (overall)
- ARE 100B
- ARE 106 (may be taken concurrently)
- ARE 155 (may be taken concurrently)



Rajvir Clair



Alexis Vivas Flores



Natalie Huerta



Irene Kitamura



Ahn Le



Serena Leung



Andrea Gomez Lloret



Huda Saleh



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Priyal Thakra

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