To all students who are satisfying the writing-intensive requirement, doing an honors paper or a term paper, in fall 2015 or winter 2016:

I would strongly urge you to enter the student competition for the Li Way Lee Lion Award. This is a competition based on the best papers in economics written by an undergraduate this academic year. You could do a theoretical or an empirical paper. If you choose to do an empirical paper, you could use a large data set (typically one downloaded from the internet) do a statistical analysis of the data, and write a paper based on your results. For example, you could use Census data, data from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), or data on crime to test a hypothesis. You should ask a faculty member (probably one whose class you are taking, or have previously taken) if he or she will decide if your proposed topic is O.K., or help you choose a topic, and review your paper before it is submitted.

The best three papers will be awarded a cash prize: $400 for first prize, $300 for second, and $200 for third, and honorable mention and an award of $50 for each of the next best three papers. The faculty mentors for those winning a prize will also receive a small award. Papers should be submitted to Ranae Hamama, our Academic Advisor, by April 11, 2016. The papers will be judged by the Awards Committee of the economics department, and winners will be announced before the last day of class. The students who win a prize or honorable mention may present their papers to the economics faculty later in a Power Point presentation. However, the real point of the competition is not to decide who wins a prize, but rather to have you learn how to write a paper. This is a valuable and very marketable skill that will help you when you enter the job market.

So the procedure is as follows:

1. Decide whether you are going to do a theoretical or empirical paper. Either one is fine. If you choose an empirical topic, find a large data set that is relevant to a problem that interests you. Review the relevant economics literature.
2. Ask a member of the faculty if he or she will oversee your work on the paper, and decide whether your topic is O.K., or suggest a suitable topic.
3. If you are doing a theoretical paper, make sure the faculty member thinks you’re on the right track. If you are doing an empirical paper, download the data and test your hypothesis using some sort of statistical software (e.g. Stata, Excel, SPSS, SAS, Minitab, Eviews, etc.)
4. Write up your results, and have the faculty member review your paper and make comments.
5. Submit the paper to Ranae Hamama electronically.

That’s all there is to it! Good luck!