Research Methods in Economics for M.A. Students
ECON 6209 - 001
Fall 1997
University of Colorado

Phil Graves
Economics Dept

Administrative Details:

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Office Hours: MW 4:00-5:30 and by appointment

Course Materials:

Robert L. Peters, Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student’s Guide to Earning a Master’s or Ph.D., Noonday Press, 1997 (revised edition).

Also of interest:

Course Objectives (abbreviated):

The ultimate purpose of this course is to help you develop an idea into an M.A. Thesis that, in turn, will be publishable as an article or monograph. It is, of course, difficult to teach "creativity," but much of what seems like a creative endeavor is merely following practical rules of research conduct.

Topical Outline of the Course:

I. Introduction, Overview, and Thinking About a Thesis Topic
   Phil Graves, "Publish or Perish: A Student Guide" (handout)
   Maier, "Introduction"
   Peters, Chaps 1-9 (optional, background); Chapter 10, 12
II. Scientific Methods and Research Methodology in Economics
   Ethridge, Chapters 1-4

III. Writing Economics
A. Writing Methods and Practices  
Peters, Chap 18

B. Economic Content of Published Research  
Ethridge, Chapters 5-9

IV. Thesis Topic Workshop  
Peters, Chap 14 (for non-thesis students); Chap 16 (others)

V. Access to Existing Research Knowledge and Methods  
A. Locating Economic Data  
Maier, The Data Game

B. Transforming Economic Data

VI. Critical Evaluations of Economic Research  
A. Characteristics and Examples of Effective Research  
Members of the faculty will present research papers to the class that they feel are particularly good examples of economic research. Those examples will focus on and critique methodology and uses of theory and empirical methods in economics.

B. Critical Review of Economic Literature  
Students will write and present a brief critical review of the literature related to the topic of their research proposal.

VII. Problems and Strategies in Economic Research  
A. Rules

B. Conducting Research and Preparing a Proposal  
Peters, Chap 17-19 (some not currently relevant)

C. Presentation and Class Critique of Research Proposals  
Peters, Chap 20

Each student will present his or her research proposal to the class. These presentations may build upon earlier presentations of each student if appropriate. The resulting discussion and peer critique will help each student progress toward a viable Master’s thesis project for the following semester.

D. Miscellaneous-- Difficulties and Prospects  
Peters, Chaps 21-24

Graded Assignments:

A. Research Proposal: Students will develop a research proposal that shows an understanding of economic methodology and develops an interesting research hypothesis and plan of investigation. This proposal will need to be thoroughly researched and differentiated from current literature. (80% of grade)

B. Critical Reviews: Students will write three short critical review papers. One will be a literature review that later will be merged into the research proposal. The other two will be seminar summaries--write-ups of two of the various seminars from the Department’s seminar series this Fall. (20% of grade)