Research Methods in Economics for M.A. Students  
ECON 6209

Fall 1998  
University of Colorado

Administrative Details:

Office: Economics 223 (2nd floor, northwest corner)  
Phone: 492-7021 (leave message); e-mail: gravesp@spot.colorado.edu  
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," yet that is precisely what art schools strive to do. In the context of the social sciences 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)