ECONOMICS 8209  
Ph.D. RESEARCH METHODS COLLOQUIUM I  
FALL, 2011  

Keith Maskus  
Economics 107  
303-492-7588; Keith.Maskus@colorado.edu  
Course website is www.colorado.edu/Economics/courses/maskus/8209  
Office hours: Tuesdays 5:00 - 6:30, Wednesdays 10:00 - 11:00 and by appointment. Please note that because I am a university administrator there may be times when I cannot meet these office hours.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to move you forward into the process of conducting original research in economics. Although this course is called “research methods”, it is only partially a course in econometric applications, theoretical modeling, or library searches. I presume that by now you have studied and attempted each of these things. Rather, our main goal here is simple. In the two-semester sequence, for which this is the first course, your job is to read, write, and talk about economics and economic research. By the end of this first semester I expect that you will have prepared and defended an extensive literature review, initial modeling, and proposal for your third-year research paper. Before that you will have many opportunities to think, write, and speak analytically and critically.

The third-year paper that you will research and write during this academic year will ideally serve as a key analytical chapter for your dissertation, to be completed in the following year. I anticipate that in some cases the paper will be in a completed form and capable of submission to a professional journal. Such a submission is not a requirement but is a worthwhile goal, both in terms of performing the research and preparing for entry into the job market. In fact, it makes sense for you to think about this third-year project strategically as an opportunity to write a professional journal article.

The primary goal is that you end this first semester with a research proposal that includes:

a) a well-specified research question;
b) a literature review that explains the innovation and contribution of the proposed research;
c) the proposed methodology (theoretical and/or empirical).

This course will be run as a true seminar, which means that students are expected to participate actively, by reading all relevant materials and contributing to classroom discussions in addition to making the presentations listed below. Classroom participation will be a large element in my assessment of your progress into a sustainable research process.

Course Activities and Schedule

Students will be divided into groups of four, with interests in similar research areas, for purposes of the fourth stage below.

Please make an appointment to see me individually, in order to discuss your research interests, no later than September 9 (the sooner the better).
Each student also must identify a primary and secondary advisor by September 26.

(1) Understanding Elements of Research
The initial task will be for the entire class to read recent published papers or working papers of my choosing (see list below) and to discuss them in class. The intent will be to begin to understand the nature of a research project and paper, including the basic elements of research.  
(Aug. 23 – Sept. 1)

Aug. 23 Lecture on nature of research in economics

Aug. 26  Comments on finding and presenting data:  
Visits to some websites;  
Example 1: Maskus, book draft on IPRs, chapter 2.1 and 2.2  
Example 2: Stuen, Mobarak and Maskus, “Skilled Immigration and Innovation: Evidence from Enrollment Fluctuations in US Doctoral Programs” (working paper)

Aug 30 - Sept. 1 Discussion of 3 recent papers

PAPERS (available on course website or ask me to email them.)
2. Stuen, Mobarak and Maskus (working paper above);  
3. Maskus and Yang, “Patent Reforms and Export Specialization”
Note: your job is to read these papers very carefully and come prepared to comment on their approaches and results. I will not be offended by your criticism of my working papers; the idea is for us to discuss how research progresses and how to make it better.

Sept. 6 Comments from current graduate students in dissertation phase: frustrations and successes in developing a research program.

(2) Critically Presenting Elements of Research
The next task will be for each student to choose and present in class a recent published paper or working paper of your choosing. You will have 20 minutes to discuss its main elements and present an analytical critique. Please email me or talk to me beforehand about your paper choice.

Sept. 8-27 Presentations of papers (3 per class; 20 minutes each, with 5 minutes discussion)

(3) Literature Review Development
It is important that you undertake a continuous process for developing your final research proposal for the semester. The first stage in this process will be for you to develop a critical and analytical literature review in your area of interest. The literature review will begin with a well-specified research question that you will fit into the literature review. You will write a paper (maximum 5 pages, double spaced) and make a 15-minute class presentation of the research question and the literature review.

Sep. 29; Oct. 4-6; Oct. 18-20 Presentations of literature reviews (4 per class; I will be away the week Oct. 11 and 13, so no class)

Written and revised literature reviews will be due to me on October 21.
(4) Identifying the Research Methodology
In the next stage you will write a short paper (maximum 5 pages, double spaced) that will set out the details of the methodology (theory and empirical) that you will use for answering your research question. You should try to be as specific as possible (e.g. actual equations and data sources). You will make a 20-minute presentation on this paper, and the other students in your group must write a 1-2 page referee's report on the paper in order to stimulate discussion. For that reason the methodology paper has to be prepared one week in advance of your presentation.

Oct. 25-27; Nov. 1-3; Nov. 15-17 (3 per class; I will be away Nov. 8 and 10 so no class; also no class Nov. 22 and 24 due to Fall break.)

Written and revised research methodologies will be due to me by November 18.

(5) Research Proposal
You will combine the literature review and methodology, deal with comments received to that point, and refine the material into a written research proposal (maximum 12 pages, double spaced). You will make an open 30-minute presentation of the proposal to me and your primary and secondary research advisors. These presentations will be scheduled for Econ 5, Econ 218, or my office at some point in the final two weeks of class. (Nov. 28 - Dec. 9)

(6) Revised Final Research Proposal
You must turn in a polished revision of your proposal by Dec. 11, 5 PM, which takes into account comments received from me, your advisors, and the class.

Course Evaluation
All of the activities above are required and will be evaluated directly by myself, in consultation with your advisors. The course grade will be determined by (a) your written work; (b) your presentations; and (c) your participation in the course. Evaluation of written work will be based on content, organization, and writing. Evaluation of oral presentations will be based on the effectiveness and clarity with which you present the material within the scheduled time. The strongest weight will be placed on the quality and completeness of the final proposal and its presentation. Finally, for this process to work it is critical that students help their colleagues by attending all classes and offering constructive and critical comments, on which your presentation grade will be based. **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY AT ALL SCHEDULED CLASSES.**

Special Accommodations Policy
If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, let me know early in the semester so that your needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office in Willard 322 (telephone 303-492-8671)