Research Methods in Economics for Ph.D. Students
Economics 6209-004

Bill Kaempfer, Econ 210A, x24486, email Kaempfer@rastro.colorado.edu

Course Materials

Also of interest:

Course Outline

[@ = with 6209-003; * = session planned to last 3:00 to about 4:15; L = lecture; S = seminar; D = discussion. All sessions marked @ will meet in Room 2. Other sessions to be coordinated.]

I. Introduction to Concept and Objectives of Research Methods in Economics: Planning Session (8-28@)

II. Scientific Methods and Research Methodology in Economics (L 9-6@*)
   Ethridge, Chapters 1-4
   Caldwell, Beyond Positivism (optional)

III. Writing Economics (L 9-11@*, L 9-13@*)
   A. Writing Methods and Practices
   B. Economic Content of Published Research
      Ethridge, Chapters 5-9
      McCloskey, The Rhetoric of Economics

IV. Access to Existing Research Knowledge and Methods (L 9-25@*, L 9-27@*, Library Tour? 10-2@*)
   A. Locating Economic Data
   B. Transforming Economic Data
V. Critical Evaluations of Economic Research
Characteristics and Examples of Effective Research (S 10-4@, S 10-6@, S 10-9@, S 10-11@, S 10-13@)

Members of the faculty will present research papers to the class that they feel are particularly good examples of economic research. These examples will focus on and critique methodology and uses of theory and empirical methods in economics.

One or more papers will be assigned for each presentation.

VI. Problems and Strategies in Economic Research
A. Topic Discussion (D 10-16?)
B. Rules (D 11-2)
C. Conducting Research and Preparing a Proposal (L 11-6@, L 11-8@)

VII. Critical Review of Economic Literature (S* 11-13 through the end of the semester plus final exam period as necessary)
Students will write and present a brief critical review of the literature related to the topic of their research proposal.

VIII. Presentation and Class Critique of Research Proposals (Spring Semester to be arranged)
Each student will present his or her research proposal to the class in seminar format. It is also a good idea that your advisor be invited to your presentation.

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. Obviously, this requirement implies a grade of IW for each student at the end of the Fall semester. (@80%)

B. Critical Reviews: Students will write three short critical review papers. One will be a literature review that later will be merged into their 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%)
Economics M.A. Thesis Proposal Checklist

1. Time Frame and Rules
   A. Make sure you know deadlines and are prepared to meet them.
   B. Keep apprised of the Graduate School rules on form, style, etc.

2. Committee
   A. Work closely with a chair/major advisor on topic and proposal.
   B. Don't worry too much about a committee, unless there is some secondary faculty member whose input is also of primary importance.
   C. Your advisor will help with suggestions about filling out the committee.

3. Thesis objectives
   A. Do interesting work: You should be aiming to ask a question that others will find of interest. Start from your knowledge of the literature. Try to juxtapose different elements of the literature, apply a different type of empirical technique (e.g., experimental, survey, time series, etc.) to a more traditional problem, employ some novel data set.
   B. Plan for publication: This gives you your own standard to meet, something to be proud of and a role model.
   C. Get it written, don't get it right: Make sure you continue to make progress.

4. Proposal outline
   A. Introduction: Make sure your topic is well explained and understood by your prospective readers.
   B. Literature: Discuss what has already been discovered in this area, with constant references (either for yourself or your readers) to how it relates to your thesis.
   C. Economic analysis: This is the formal development of your hypotheses. You need to explain not only what you are setting out to demonstrate, but how you arrived there.
   D. Empirical analysis: For the proposal, you need to relate the methods, the tests and the data that you will depend upon in the final work.
   E. Concluding remarks: My advice is to generate concluding remarks, not a "conclusion". Such a section in the final thesis allows you to say where you might go next with the problem, what went right and wrong, and discuss the general tenor of the results from potentially different prospectives than the basic one taken in the thesis.