

## **Economics 8209- Research Methods**

### **Fall 2016, T/Th 12:30-1:45, ECON 5**

Professor Terra G. McKinnish

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Office Hours: T 9:30-10:30, W 9:30-11:30, and by appointment

### **Course Goals**

The purpose of this course is to transition you into the research phase of your doctoral studies.

The primary goal is that you end this 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)

### **Course Content**

The semester will consist of 6 activities:

**1) Introductory lectures and exercises:** What is research? Where do research ideas come from? How should I work with an advisor? What makes a good introduction/ literature review? What makes a good presentation? Students will discuss a set of introductions/literature reviews from published papers. Students will also develop “practice presentation slides” for a published paper.

**2) Paper presentation:** Students will pick an important paper related to their area of interest and make a 15-20 min presentation to the class.

**3) Literature review:** Students will write a 3-5 page literature review for their proposed topic and make a 15-20 min presentation to the class. Ideally, the literature review will start with a well-specified research question around which you organize your literature review.

**4) Proposed methodology:** Students will write a 3-5 page paper describing the methodology (theoretical and/or empirical, as appropriate) that will be used to answer the research question. Students should strive to be as specific as possible (e.g. actual equations). They will make a 15-20 minute presentation of the methodology to the class.

**5) Final presentation and proposal:** Students will use their literature review and methodology papers, and the feedback they received during the semester, to write a final proposal of 8-12 pages. Students will make a 30 minute presentation of their proposal to me and their advisor(s).

**6) Peer-Editing of Manuscripts:** For both the literature review and the methodology assignments, students will provide an early rough draft to two designated classmates at the beginning of the week the assignment is due. Each student will then edit the two drafts they receive and provide feedback to their classmates.

## **Course Schedule**

Aug 23: Introductory Lecture

Aug 25: Advice from 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> year students

Aug 30: Prior to class: Pick out a published paper of interest to you. Send links/copies to the other 2 students in your group. Each group of 3 should have read the 3 introductions/lit reviews for their group prior to class, as well as the introduction of: Jacobi and Sovinsky, "Marijuana on Main Street? Estimating Demand in Markets with Limited Access" AER August 2016 106(8):2009-2045.

Sept 1: Prior to class: 1) Read Fisman et al., "Gender Differences in Mate Selection: Evidence from a speed-dating experiment." QJE, May 2006. 2) Prepare draft of presentation slides for Fisman et al. (up to presentation of results) to discuss in class in groups.

Sept 6, 8: Class time will be used to for each student to meet with me individually.

Sept 20, 22, 27, 29: Paper presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Oct 4, 6: Class time will be used for students to meet with me individually.

Oct 11, 13, 18, 20: Literature review presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Oct 25, 27: Individual meetings, peer editing. Lit Review due Fri, Oct 28.

Nov 1, 3, 8, 10: Methodology presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Nov 15, 17: Individual meetings, peer editing. Methodology due Fri, Nov 18.

Nov 29-Dec 10: Final presentations (30 min) to me and your advisor(s).  
Final proposals due Dec 13, 5 pm.

## **Grades**

The primary determinant of your grade will be the quality of your final paper and presentation. Final proposals will be evaluated on the extent to which they present a well-defined research question, clearly explain the expected contribution to the literature, and whether there is a proposed methodology that matches the question and contribution. Your performance on the earlier components of the semester can also be factored into your grade, particularly if they are substantially above or below reasonable course expectations.