

Economics 8209- Research Methods

Fall 2017, T/Th 12:30-1:45, ECON 5

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Office Hours: T 9:30-11, 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, with a particular focus on a well-written introduction and a clear methodology. 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 29: Introductory Lecture

Aug 31: Advice from upper year students

Sept 5: Prior to class: Pick out a published paper of interest to you. Send links/copies to the other 2 students in your group by 5 pm on Sept 1. Read and mark-up the introduction of: Jacobi and Sovinsky, "Marijuana on Main Street? Estimating Demand in Markets with Limited Access" AER August 2016 106(8):2009-2045. Also read the 3 introductions for your group prior to class.

Sept 7: 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 5-7 presentation slides for Fisman et al. (question/motivation, data and methods, key findings) to discuss in class in groups.

Sept 12, 14: Class time will be used to for each student to meet with me individually.

Sept 26, 28, Oct 3: Paper presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Oct 5: Overview of Literature Reviews.

Oct 12, 17, 19: Literature review presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Oct 26: Peer editing of Lit Review, Overview of Methodologies.

Lit Review due Mon, Oct 30 by 9 pm.

Nov 7, 9, 14: Methodology presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Nov 28: Peer editing of Methodologies.

Methodology due Fri, Dec 1 by 9 pm.

Dec 4-Dec 15: Final presentations (30 min) to me and your advisor(s).

Final proposals due Tues Dec 19, 9 pm.

Grades

The primary determinant of your grade will be the quality of your final proposal document 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.