

Economics 8219: Research Methods 2

Spring 2016: Syllabus

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Hours: Tuesdays 9-11; Thursdays 1-3 and by appointment

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Class schedule: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15 Econ 5

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of the two-semester sequence in research methods are (1) to familiarize students with how research is performed and presented in economics and (2) to facilitate students' progress in framing and completing a professional research project. The specific objective of this second course is to make sufficient progress on this project to prepare students to defend an oral presentation, based upon a complete written proposal, constituting the comprehensive examination in economics. I expect this work will, in most cases, also produce a manuscript that will be the basis of a first analytical chapter for the dissertation and/or a research paper suitable for submission to a professional journal.

In this course students will also gain extensive practice in making short conference presentations, reviewing and editing other students' papers, and revising their own work. I also expect that you will work closely with your advisor(s) in progressing your research, along with helping each other with joint editing, commenting on drafts, and the like.

Course Content

In essence the course will be designed to have you build successively the major components of your research paper/proposal. Following are the activities in which students will participate.

1. *Presentation of a current working paper*: You will choose and present in 20 minutes the main elements of a current working paper (eg, NBER) in the literature that is relevant to your own work.
2. *Detailed abstract of research proposal*: I will give you guidelines for generating a 3-5 page (double spaced) detailed abstract of your proposal. Issues involve developing motivation, explaining your primary research question, explaining the contribution of your research to the literature, and key points of your methodology. Working through your abstract will provide an opportunity to understand how to frame and motivate a question, including a focus on key stylized facts, real-world examples, and a critical data presentation. Even if you are working on a theory paper these issues can be crucial to motivation.
3. *Group editing of the detailed abstract*: Given the limited enrollment I will organize the class into two groups that I expect to work together on improving each student's paper. Thus, each student will send to their other group members his or her detailed abstract in advance of the class scheduled for group discussion and editing. Each member is expected to edit the

detailed abstracts. In class the group members will go over the edits in detail with the group and author and discuss how the author may improve his or her work.

4. *Short presentations*: Students will make 2 short (15 or 20 minute) conference-style presentations of their research, involving (1) detailed abstract; (2) data methods/setup. More details are below.
5. *Group editing of most sections of the proposal*: Students will send drafts of different sections of their proposals to group members at different points in the semester. You will send the draft in advance of the designated class and group members are expected to come to class with detailed edits for each draft. In class you will jointly go over the edits in detail with the group and author and discuss potential avenues for improvement.
6. *Final papers/presentations*: The required final product of the semester is a draft of the student's comprehensive examination proposal. This proposal should be written like a research paper, including citations, footnotes or endnotes, appendices, tables and figures. In cases where you don't have all available data or have not finished the modeling you can state explicitly what you plan to do to resolve these issues. I anticipate that in most cases you will have results that are close to finalized. Presentations will take place during the last two weeks of class. I expect most of you will use this presentation as your oral comprehensive exam (required for advancement to PhD candidacy). Because this is the primary goal of the class, those making such presentations as oral exams will be given first choice of dates on which to present and defend. *Note that a complete draft must be provided one week in advance of the presentation if it is to serve as a comprehensive exam.* Final papers, which reflect all editing suggestions you receive and recommendations for changes in the oral, are due to me on the last day of class. In many cases the paper you handed in for your oral comprehensive exam will suffice as your final paper and I will let you know that at the time of the comprehensive exam. See below for more details regarding guidelines for the oral comprehensive exam and defense.

Grading

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| Class participation | 5% |
| Peer editing | 10% |
| Working paper presentation | 5% |
| Short presentations | 20% |
| Final presentation | 25% |
| Written final proposal/paper | 35% |

Tentative Class Schedule

| WEEK OF | TUESDAY | THURSDAY | NOTES |
|------------|---|---|---------|
| 1 – Jan 11 | Introduction/Detailed Abstract/ Paper Advice/Create Groups | Presentation Advice/ Descriptive Data Analysis | |
| 2 – Jan 18 | No class: work on presentation and your detailed abstract | No class: work on presentation and your detailed abstract | KM away |
| 3 – Jan 25 | Working paper (WP) | WP presentations and <i>submit</i> | |

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| | presentations | <i>detailed abstract to group and KM</i> | |
| 4 – Feb 1 | Group edit: detailed abstracts | No class: <i>submit revised detailed abstract to KM</i> | |
| 5 – Feb 8 | Individual meetings with me | Individual meetings with me | |
| 6 – Feb 15 | Individual meetings with me | Short presentations of abstracts | |
| 7 – Feb 22 | Short presentations of abstracts | No class: <i>Draft due of “Data/methods: empirical strategy, model outline or setup” to group and KM</i> | KM away Thurs |
| 8 – Feb 29 | Group edit: Data/methods, etc. | Individual meetings with me | |
| 9 – Mar 7 | Individual meetings with me | Individual meetings with me; <i>revised data/methods draft due to KM</i> | |
| 10 - Mar 14 | Short presentations of revised data/methods draft | Short presentations of revised data/methods draft | |
| 11 – Mar 21 | SPRING BREAK | SPRING BREAK | |
| 12 – Mar 28 | Class: Preparing final presentation | No class; <i>extended draft with initial results or refined methods due to group and KM</i> | |
| 13 – Apr 4 | Group edit: extended draft | No class; work on presentations | KM away Thurs |
| 14 – Apr 11 | Individual meetings with me | Individual meetings with me | |
| 15 – Apr 18 | Final Presentations/Comp. Exam | Final Presentations/Comp. Exam | |
| 16 – Apr 25 | Final Presentations/Comp. Exam | Final Presentations/Comp. Exam; <i>Final papers/proposals due.</i> | |

Due Dates

All due dates are listed on the schedule above and repeated below. Please send them to your group members (where relevant) and to me by 5 pm on the due date. I would also like you to put a hard copy in my mailbox by 5 pm on the due date. The final papers/proposals are due on April 28, the last day of our class. Email it to me and put a hard copy in my box that day.

Summary of due dates:

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|---|----------|
| 1. Detailed abstract (group and KM) | Jan. 28 |
| 2. Revised abstract (KM) | Feb 4 |
| 3. Draft of methods section(s) (group and KM) | Feb 22 |
| 4. Revised methods section(s) (KM) | March 10 |
| 5. Extended results draft (group and KM) | March 31 |
| 6. Final papers (KM) | April 28 |

In addition, if your final project will be the comprehensive exam keep in mind the need to get it to the faculty committee one week in advance.

Short Presentations

The purpose of these 15- or 20-minute presentations is to give you practice at a short conference-style talk, which will be very helpful going forward. **All students are expected to attend all presentations.** Especially important in these talks is the first five minutes, in which you must lay out in clear and concise terms your motivation, your research question, and its contribution to the literature. Include stylized facts, a key graph or two (data presentation), and an example or two if you can find them. The remainder of the time is devoted to the body of what you want to discuss, including primary research methods, any key theoretical findings, data, key results, and any central messages to learn from the work. This task will be straightforward (but good practice) when you present a working paper from the literature. But when you present your abstract, most will not have completed research to discuss. In that case the remaining 15 minutes can be managed in one of the following ways.

- A. If you have preliminary theoretical or empirical results, go ahead and present them just as you would at a conference.
- B. If you are doing empirical research and do not yet have results, lay out the empirical model and/or your identification strategy and any biases and statistical problems you expect to have to deal with, such as endogeneity, selection issues, etc. and how you would deal with them. If you have data but not results yet, generate a descriptive analysis to describe the quality of your data and the key variables you expect to use for identification. This may well take the form of a data plot and graphs. You may also want to discuss problems you are facing or expect to face.
- C. If you are doing a theory paper and do not yet have results, spend your time motivating your model with further stories, facts, case studies, and so on that convince the audience that your model has important implications for analyzing a real economic problem. You should be in a position to present the model's basic setup and problems you are facing in solving the model. Be clear on the contribution you are making, what model(s) you are extending, and how it will help understand the problem.
- D. If you have no real model or results to discuss, perhaps you can talk (speculate in an informed way) about how your presentation would be organized, slide by slide. That is, you can discuss ideas such as "this slide will contain my model assumptions, which must address the following factors." "The next slide will contain Proposition I, which will be a statement or empirical hypothesis about idea X." "The next slide will graph outcome Y as a function of model parameters A and B." Or "the next slide will have a table of my basic OLS results, then the next will have fixed-effects results, then results broken down into industry or country types." Even in this minimal case, however, your abstract and motivation should be very clear about what your research question is and why it is interesting, and how you can analyze it.

In the presentations the class will observe conference-style rules, which means we will interrupt only for clarifying questions and make substantive questions after you are finished talking. We will reserve time for questions and discussion after each presentation. Pay attention to the time limits since this is also good practice for you; people at conferences get irritated at presenters who go on too long. When it comes time to present your abstract (the 2d presentation), email your abstract to everyone in the class at least two days before your present it. Each student is expected to have read the detailed abstract for that day's presentations and to have prepared questions. Presenters should arrive 5 minutes early to the class to load their slides onto my laptop (it's a PC) or be ready to use your own laptop.

Final Presentations

This will be a one-hour presentation (including question time) for those doing their comprehensive oral exam before a 3-person faculty committee. That committee will consist of me, your primary advisor, and a 3rd faculty member, preferably your secondary advisor. Prepare a 35-minute slide presentation and expect to answer questions. Scheduling will be managed later on since that depends on faculty availability but I will try to schedule them during class time. Other students are welcome to come and participate but not required to do so.

This will be a 30-minute presentation (including questions) for those presenting a final project that is not a comprehensive oral. These will be scheduled during class times and all other students are expected to attend and ask questions.

Oral Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

The oral comprehensive exam is a one-hour presentation based largely on the student's 3rd-year paper. It is not a dissertation proposal defense, which will come later. The presentation is open to anyone but usually is attended only by the 3 faculty members designated as the examiners. Make sure you identify and ask the faculty members well in advance. I will be one of the examiners, so you need one more person in addition to your advisor.

A student is considered ready to present in the oral if, in the opinion of his or her advisor(s), he or she has a well-developed proposal that sets out research that can actually be completed. (This means that ideally you may even have results that are close to final and the proposal may be more like a research paper.)

The written proposal, including a complete list of references cited, must be distributed to the examiners at least one week in advance. If this deadline is not met, the exam must be rescheduled. Students are held responsible for knowing all of the literature they list in their references. Examiners who find the reference list incomplete may contact the student in advance of the presentation to suggest additional literature of relevance and it is then the student's responsibility to familiarize himself or herself with these papers before the presentation.

Prior to the start of the oral defense you will be asked to leave the room so that the committee can consult briefly. At the end, all attendees except the examiners must exit the room so that the committee can discuss the performance of the student in confidence. The student presenter will then be asked back into the room and told the result of the exam.

As noted, each student's comprehensive examining committee will consist of 3 faculty members, 2 of which should be the primary advisor and, ideally, the secondary advisor. For comprehensive exams that take place in 8219, I will serve as the 3rd member. If the exam takes place later the student should find a 3rd member who is more likely to be on the dissertation committee.

In consultation with the primary advisor(s), students are responsible for scheduling the remaining faculty members to serve on the comprehensive exam committee. You are also responsible for booking a room if you do not present during class time.

University Policies

University policies regarding classroom behavior are available at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior> and http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/studentconduct/code.html#student_code

Standard regarding the student honor code are at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu/>

University policies regarding disabilities are available at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>.

University policies regarding religious practice are available at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

University policies regarding Sexual Harassment and Amorous Relationships are available at <http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/Pages/default.aspx>