

Economics 8209
PhD Research Methods
Fall 2006

Department of Economics
University of Colorado Boulder

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General Details

This course will be team taught by Jim Markusen and Randy Walsh.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to push you into the process of conducting original research in economics. Although the course is called “research methods”, it is only partly a course in econometric applications, theoretical modeling, or library searches. Most of the course is in fact a “learn-by-doing” introduction to economic research. By the end of the first semester, we expect that you will have prepared and defended an extensive literature review, initial modeling, and proposal for your third-year research paper. During the process, you will have many opportunities to think, write, and speak analytically and critically.

The third-year research 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. By the end of the academic year, you should thus have a principal chapter for your thesis essentially finished, and an outline for the remaining content of the thesis.

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 our assessment of your progress into a sustainable research process.

Course Activities

There are currently 17 students registered. We may divide you into groups of 4 or 5 on the basis of research interests, for purposes of the fourth stage below.

Each student must identify a primary and secondary advisor by September 25. For almost all of you, this will not be either Markusen or Walsh. Markusen in particular is overwhelmed with a large group of fourth and fifth year students. All of the latter are trying to finish by the end of

the term, and his task has been made much more difficult with Professor Maskus going on leave.

Part I: Understanding Elements of Research

Walsh and Markusen will give lectures during approximately the first two weeks. We are not setting too rigorous a schedule, since we are both new to this and want to be flexible as contingencies arise. The class will be required to read some recent published papers *before the lectures* 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: Approximately August 29 to September 14.

Markusen and Venables, "Multinational Firms and the New Trade Theory", *Journal of International Economics* 46 (1998), 183-204.

Carr, Markusen and Maskus, "Estimating the Knowledge-Capital Model of the Multinational Enterprise", *American Economic Review* 91 (2001), 693-708.

List, J., "Does market Experience Eliminate Market Anomalies?", *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118 (2003), 41-71.

Goldin, C. And C. Rouse, "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of "Blind" Auditions on Female Musicians", *American Economic Review* 90 (2000), 715-741.

Banzhaf, S. And R. Walsh, "Do People Vote with Their Feet? An Empirical Test of Environmental Gentrification", working paper (2006).

Part II: 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. You will have 20 minutes to discuss its main elements and present an analytical critique: Approximately September 19 - October 5..

Part III: 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 12 pages, double spaced) and make a 20-minute class presentation of the research question and the literature review: Approximately October 10 - October 26.

Part IV: Identifying the Research Methodology

In the next state, you will write a short paper (maximum 10 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 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: Approximately October 31- November 16.

Part V: Research Proposal

You will combine the literature review and methodology, deal with the comments received to that point, and refine the material into a written research proposal (maximum 25 pages, double spaced). You will make an open 30-minute presentation of the proposal to us and your primary and secondary research advisors. These presentations will be through the two weeks following Fall (Thanksgiving) break: Approximately November 28 - December 7.

Part VI: Revised Final Research Proposal

You must turn in a polish revision of your proposal by December 13, 5pm, which takes into account comments received from us, your advisors, and the class.

Course Evaluation

All of the activities above are required and will be evaluated directly by Markusen and Walsh, 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. Written work for item (3) is due at the time of your presentation and for item (4) one week before your presentation. Evaluation of oral presentations will be based on the effectiveness and clarity with which you present the material *within the scheduled time*. 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 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 us 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 (2-8671).