

Economics 8209
PhD Research Methods
Fall 2007

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 a 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

Each student must identify a primary and secondary advisor by Monday September 24th. For almost all of you, this will not be either Markusen or Walsh.

Part 1: Understanding Elements of Research

Walsh and Markusen will give lectures during approximately the first three weeks (note: there will be no class on Wednesday September 12th). We are not setting too rigorous a schedule, since we 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 29th to September 17th.

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.

Banzhaf, S. And R. Walsh, "Do People Vote with Their Feet? An Empirical Test of Environmental Gentrification", *American Economic Review*, Forthcoming.

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 30 minutes to discuss its main elements and present an analytical critique: Approximately September 19th - October 10th.

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, followed by 10 minutes of class discussion and critique: Approximately October 15th - October 31st.

Part IV: Identifying the Research Methodology

In the next stage, 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. Additionally, each student will be assigned a referee for this paper. The referee will be one of the other students in the class. You **MUST** get your paper to your assigned referee at least 5 days prior to your presentation. Your referee will write a 2 page critique of the paper and then give 5-7 minutes of comments following the paper presentation. This will be followed by 5-10 minutes of discussion

by the class. Approximately November 5th- November 28th (note: thanksgiving break falls in here).

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: December 3rd - December 14th.

Part VI: Revised Final Research Proposal

You must turn in a polish revision of your proposal by December 17th, 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 based on two components the first is the quality of your work during the semester including: (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. Evaluation of oral presentations will be based on the effectiveness and clarity with which you present the material *within the scheduled time*. The second component of your grade will be based on the quality of your proposal to your advisors and your final research proposal. We will synthesize your grades on these two components using the MIN function. In other words, your final grade will be the lowest of the two component grades.

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).