

Economics 8209- Research Methods **Fall 2008, Mon/Wed 10:30-11:45, ECON 5**

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Office Hours: 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 5 activities:

1) Introductory lectures: lectures on What is research? Where do research ideas come from? How do I pick and work with advisors? What do I need to know now about the job market for economists? What makes a good literature review? What makes a good presentation?

Previous students in this course and faculty members fresh from the job market will be invited to offer guest commentary on some of these questions.

Students will be assigned several literature reviews and two published papers to read as part of the discussion. They will also make “practice presentation slides” for one of these papers and discuss them in groups.

2) Paper presentation: Students will pick an important paper related to their proposed topic and make a 20-30 min presentation to the class.

3) Literature review: Students will write a 5-10 page literature review for their proposed topic and make a 20-30 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 5-10 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 30 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 create a final proposal of no more than 20 pages. Students will make a 30 minute presentation of their proposal to me and their advisor(s).

Course Schedule

Aug 25, 27; Sept 3, 8, 10: Introductory Lectures

Before class on Sept 8, students should:

- 1) Read set of literature reviews distributed on first day of class
- 2) Read McKinnish, T. "Importing the Poor: Welfare Magnetism and Cross-Border Welfare Migration." *Journal of Human Resources*, Winter 2005. (also on my web site)

Before class on Sept 10, students should:

- 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 15, 17: No Class, Office Hours. All students must meet with me during this week to discuss the status of their search for an advisor and topic.

Sept 22, 24, 29, Oct 1: Paper presentations. Students attend all presentations.

Oct 6,8: No Class, Office Hours. Feel free to come by with questions.

Oct 13, 14, 20, 22: Literature review presentations. Students attend all presentations. Written literature review due to me Oct 22.

Oct 27, 29; Nov 3, 5: No Class. Office Hours on Nov 3 and 5.

Nov 10, 12, 17, 19: Methodology presentations. Students attend all presentations. Written Methodology sections due to me Nov 19.

Dec 1-12: Final 30 min presentations to me and your advisors. Can be scheduled during or outside class time. Final proposals due to me Dec 10.

Grades

The primary determinant of your grade will be the quality of your final paper and presentation; however, your performance on the earlier components of the semester will also be factored into your grade.

Class Presentations

Presenters should get to the classroom 10 minutes early so that their presentations are loaded on the laptop and the projector is up and running by the start of class.