

Economics 8209- Research Methods

Fall 2009, Mon/Wed 12:00-1:15, 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?

Students will be assigned several literature reviews and one published paper 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 24, 26, 31; Sep 2: Introductory Lectures

Before class on Aug 31, students should read set of literature reviews distributed on first day of class.

Before class on Sept 2, 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 9: 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 14-23 and Oct 5-7: Paper presentations. Students attend all presentations. (No class on Sept 28 and Sept 30)

Oct 12-28: Literature review presentations. Students attend all presentations. Written literature review due to me Oct 30.

Nov 2-18: Methodology presentations. Students attend all presentations. Written Methodology sections due to me Nov 20.

Nov 30-Dec 11: Final 30 min presentations to me and your advisors. Can be scheduled during or outside class time. Final proposals due to me Dec 11.

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.