

## **Economics 8219- Research Methods** **Spring 2007, Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45, ECON 5**

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Office Hours: by appointment

### **Course Goals**

The first and most obvious goal of this course is to make significant progress on your 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper and, hopefully, defend your comprehensive exam. We will also focus on developing some generally useful skills: making clear and concise statements of research question and contribution, making short conference presentations, creating descriptive data analysis, and editing written work.

### **Course Content**

Students will participate in the following activities:

- 1) Executive Summary of Research Proposal: Students will be given guidelines for generating a 1-2 page executive summary, or detailed abstract, of their research proposal that will cover their main research question, the contribution of their research to the literature, and the key points of their methodology. This is often the form in which you submit your work for a conference. This is also the type of summary of your work you will write up and memorize when you prepare for job market interviews.
- 2) Group Editing of Executive Summaries: Students will divide into small groups and help each other revise their executive summaries.
- 3) In-Class Descriptive Data Analysis (DDA) Exercise: Students will break into groups, be assigned a hypothetical research topic and data description; will describe appropriate tables and graphs; will report back to the rest of the class.
- 4) 15-min Presentation: Mid-way through the semester students will make a 15-min “conference style” presentation of their research. More detail is below.
- 5) Final Paper/Presentation: The final product of this semester is hopefully a meaningful draft of a research paper that contains respectable results (analytical and/or empirical). Presentations will take place the last 5-6 weeks of class. Students have the option of using this presentation as their oral comprehensive exam; those doing so will have first pick among the dates at the end of the semester. *Note that a complete draft must be provided 2 weeks in advance of the presentation if it is serving as a comprehensive exam.* Final papers are due on the last day of class. See below for more details regarding the guidelines for the oral comprehensive exam.

### **Course Schedule**

First 2 Weeks:

Jan. 16- Course Introduction and Advice

Jan. 18- Lectures on Descriptive Data Analysis and Selling Your Research

Jan. 23- In-Class Descriptive Data Analysis Discussion

*Executive Summaries Due at Noon, Wed. Jan 24 to Me and Your Group*

Jan. 25- Group Discussions and Editing of Executive Summaries

*Final Executive Summaries and Copies of Proposals Due Mon, Jan 29.*

Individual Meetings:

Jan. 30-Feb. 13 – No Class; Individual meetings to discuss paper progress

“15 Min” Presentations:

Feb. 16- Feb 27- All students expected to attend all presentations. More detail below.

Office Hours:

Mar.1-Mar. 15- No Class; Available for individual meetings to discuss paper progress, excluding Feb 28-March 6.

Final Presentations

Mar.20-May 3- 1 hour presentations for those doing their comprehensive oral exam; ½ hour otherwise. All students expected to attend all presentations.

*Final Paper Due May 3.*

## **Grades**

The primary determinant of your grade will be the quality of your final paper and presentation; however, your performance on the 15 min presentation, as well as your participation in the exercises during the first 2 weeks of class and your attendance/participation in the final presentations of your classmates will also be factored in.

### **15 min Presentation, more details**

The purpose of the 15 min presentations are to give you practice at a short conference-style presentation. The most important part of the presentation is the first five minutes, in which you are expect to lay out in very clear and concise terms your research question and its contribution to the literature. Your previous work writing and revising your executive summary should benefit you here. Because most of you will not have completed research to discuss, the remaining 10 minutes of the presentation can take on more than one form. Some suggestions:

A) If you have preliminary results, theoretical or empirical, go ahead and present them just as you would at a conference.

B) If you are doing empirical research, and you do not have results, you can generate descriptive analysis to describe the quality of information and the key variation in the data.

C) You can update us on one specific aspect of your research on which you have made progress since the end of the fall semester.

D) If you are working on a theory paper, and do not yet have results, you can spend some time motivating your model with the anecdotes, case studies, stylized facts that convince us your model has real-world implications.

E) You can discuss the form your presentation would take with completed slides: e.g. “This slide will contain my model assumptions. This slide will contain Proposition I, which will likely state

X. This slide will graph outcome Y as a function of the model parameters A and B.” or “This slide will have a table of my basic OLS results. This slide will contain my fixed-effects results, pooled and then separated into developing and developed countries.”

The audience will observe conference-style rules, which means we only interrupt for clarifying questions and reserve substantive questions for the end. This means that your 15 minutes will be virtually uninterrupted. You are expected to adhere strictly to the time limit, as going over reflects poorly on you at real conferences.

We will do 4 presentations per day and all four presenters should get to the classroom 10-15 minutes early and get their presentations loaded onto the laptop by the start of class. If that day's presentations are using a student laptop, I would prefer that other presenters get their slides to him/her in advance so that they will already be on the laptop before coming to class.

## **Oral Comprehensive Exam Guidelines:**

### **A. Basic Guidelines**

- 1) The oral Comprehensive is to be a one hour presentation based largely on the student's 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper.
- 2) The presentation can be open but must be attended by at least 5 faculty members designated as the comprehensive examiners for the student (more details below).
- 3) A student is deemed ready to present if, in the opinion of her advisor(s), she has a research paper that is virtually complete (has real theoretical and/or empirical results, but not necessarily fully polished).
- 4) The written paper, with a complete reference list of literature cited, must be distributed to the comprehensive examiners at least two weeks in advance. If this deadline is not met, the comprehensive exam must be rescheduled.
- 5) Students are held responsible for all literature listed in the reference list of the 3d-year paper.
- 6) Having received the paper at least two weeks in advance, examiners who find the reference list to be incomplete may contact the student in advance of the presentation to suggest additional literature that is relevant for the research project. It is then the student's responsibility to familiarize herself with this literature, which should be listed by the examiner with sufficient lead time for that purpose, before the presentation. During the exam, examiners may, of course, question the student on any issues and literature they wish. The expectations regarding the student's familiarity with the literature are simply lower if the faculty examiner has not raised the issue in advance.
- 7) At the end of the oral comprehensive, all attendees except the examining committee must exit the room so that the examiners may discuss the performance of the student.

### **B. Choice of Comprehensive Exam Format:**

- 1) If the student has made sufficient progress, as defined in point 3) above, the final presentation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year seminar (8219) may serve as her comprehensive exam.
- 2) Students that do not complete their comprehensive exam in 8219 must schedule a comprehensive exam before the end of the Fall semester of their 4<sup>th</sup> year.
- 3) Dissertation proposals defended by students before the end of the Fall semester of their 4<sup>th</sup> year may also serve as the comprehensive exam, again subject to the basic guidelines above.

Note the implication that the proposal must therefore contain at least one virtually complete paper.

**C. Faculty Examining Committee:**

Each student's comprehensive examining committee will consist of 5 faculty members, two of which should be the student's primary and secondary dissertation advisors.

- 1) For comprehensive exams that take place in 8219, the 8219 instructor will serve as the 3<sup>rd</sup> committee member.
- 2) In consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or dissertation advisors, students are responsible for scheduling the remaining faculty members to serve on their comprehensive committee.
- 3) To aid the students, a department-level Comprehensive Exam Committee will be formed of 6 faculty members. Faculty members serving on this committee will make themselves available to act as the additional members of comprehensive committees, but students are not required to use faculty from this committee.