

# Economics Research Methods Workshop

## ECON 8219

Spring 2009 TR 11:00-12:15 Econ 5

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### Objectives

This second semester research colloquium is for students working on their third-year papers to discuss and present their ongoing work. In this course, you will be asked to produce a completed research paper or a polished research proposal. As you do so, you will also be asked to communicate your research findings in a concise, clear, and convincing fashion; to keep working on drafts of your paper and presentation slides until they are polished and free of obvious errors; and to develop an ability to formulate critical questions. To this end, the course is run as a series of presentations in which you present increasingly complete drafts of your paper, while continuing to be active in responding and thinking about the ongoing research of others.

Each student should, it is hoped, have a paper by April or May that is ready to be defended as your oral comprehensive exam. Students who pass the exam are formally admitted to candidacy. Ideally, this paper will also serve as a substantial chapter of your thesis. By using the third-year paper to fulfill the oral exam requirement of the graduate program, you will thus also have made significant progress towards the completion of your thesis.

### Course Requirements

1. You will make a series of presentations of your own paper and have short assignments. Apart from the oral exam, attendance at presentations of other students is mandatory. To facilitate class participation, presenters should send their paper and presentation slides to me two days before your scheduled presentation. For example, if you present on Thursday Jan. 22, then you should email me your draft of the paper before 4 p.m. on Tuesday Jan 20. (You may continue to make changes to your slides if needed.) I will post your paper on the CULearn website that evening so that everyone will have at least one full day to read your work before your in-class presentation.
2. Participation in departmental research seminars.
3. A course paper, including an abstract and references, due on or before May 7.

### Comprehensive Examination

The exam is a one hour long presentation that is based on your third-year paper. Your final presentation in ECON 8219 can serve to fulfill this requirement. (**Note:** even if your advisors think you are not yet ready for your comprehensive exam, you still have to make a final

presentation in ECON 8219.) You are strongly advised to complete the comprehensive requirement in the Spring semester of your 3<sup>rd</sup> year so that you can move on to the other papers in your dissertation. This is only one of several papers that you will have to write for your dissertation!

At least three faculty members must be present at the exam. Typically this committee will include your primary and secondary advisors. I will serve as the third member of the committee.

The written paper (i.e., your 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper) including references and all results, must be circulated to the comprehensive examiners two weeks prior to your presentation.

You can expect the format of your presentation to be similar to that of a typical economics seminar, where you may be interrupted with questions as you speak. Examiners may raise any issue that they wish, but generally, the questions and comments will be relevant to your research paper topic.

### **Departmental Research Seminars**

There will be quite a number of departmental research seminars on the schedule this semester. Many of these seminars will be given by Ph.D. students presenting a paper out of their dissertation. This is your chance to sit in the audience and consider what a job market paper and recruitment seminar might look like. The schedule of seminars is given on the economics webpage at <http://www.colorado.edu/Economics/seminars/index.html>.

Observing economics seminars will also help when it comes to writing and presenting your own work. For this course, I would like you to attend weekly seminars, but am asking that you provide a written response to just *six* seminars. For this short assignment, turn in a written response to the seminar (a couple of paragraphs, not more than 1 typed page). Do not bother summarizing the detailed substance of the paper. Instead, the goal is for you to sit down and think about what constitutes a compelling paper and a good presentation—the two are not always the same. Here are some possible aspects to consider:

- Of all the questions from the audience, which were among the best questions, and why?  
Your answer may include a question that you asked the speaker yourself.
- What was the most compelling aspect of the paper and presentation, and why?
- What was the weakest aspect of the paper and presentation, and why?
- What lessons, if any did you draw from observing the style of the speaker and the way in which the presentation slides were organized?
- Did the speaker defend his paper successfully, in your opinion? If you were presenting this paper, what would you have done or said differently?
- Compare this paper and presentation to the previous ones you have seen. What did you like, what did you not like?
- Anything else that strikes you as important.

### **Tentative Schedule**

January 13, 15. Introduction.

January 20. No class.

January 22 - February 17. In the first round presentation, you present your paper as it currently stands, starting from the introduction and the previous literature sections. If you are writing a theoretical paper, motivate your paper with examples and anecdotes of empirical relevance. At this point, your topic, or the “question” you are asking in the paper should be clearly stated. Those who are not presenting are required to read the paper and have prepared at least three questions, comments, or suggestions. Please write out your points on paper so they can be given to the authors. The format of these presentations will be the “workshop style”, i.e. you jump in with your question at an appropriate moment.

February 24 – March 5. No class, individual meetings.

March 10 - March 19. In your second round presentation, you briefly summarize your topic and focus your presentation on your data sources, present descriptive statistics and any results obtained thus far from work in progress. Those presenting a theoretical paper should discuss new aspects of their model not covered in your previous presentation. There will be two presenters scheduled for each class. Those not presenting should think about questions for the presenters (again, please write them out).

March 23-27 (Mon-Fri). Spring Break.

March 31-April 16. In the third round presentation, you will spend class time on presenting the final results from your paper as they stand, or other work in progress. With the new results in hand, you should be able to draw some conclusions. There will be two presenters scheduled for each class day. Those not presenting should think about questions for the presenters. Again, write them out.

April 17-May 7. No class. Final presentations. Your main advisors will be asked to be present at this final presentation whether or not you are taking your comprehensive exam this semester.

### **Course Grade**

Grading will be determined by the quality of your course paper, with overall weight given to your final presentation and paper. Your class participation and performance on the shorter seminar assignments will also be factored in as part of your course grade. For the shorter assignments grading will be based on a scale from 0 to 2. (0 for not handing in the assignment, 1 for minimal effort, 2 for a thoughtful response)

Class participation & shorter assignments	30%
Class participation (15%)	
Department seminar assignments (15%)	
Presentations and paper	70%