

# Economics Research Methods Workshop

## ECON 8219-001

Spring 2008 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. 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. In addition, I will meet with each of you individually several times throughout the course to discuss your progress.

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.

### Recommended Text

*A Guide for the Young Economist* by William Thomson. MIT Press.

### Course Requirements

1. You will make a series of presentations of your own paper and have short assignments related to the papers of other students in the class. Attendance at all presentations is mandatory. All papers are due to me three days before the presentation. E.g. if you present on Feb 5, then you should email me the paper in the morning of Feb 2. I will post your paper on my website for this course so that everyone can read it before class. Those who are presenting, please arrive 10-15 minutes early. All those presenting on a certain day should try to agree on using one laptop and have each presentation loaded on that laptop before the start of class.
2. Participation in departmental research seminars.
3. A course paper and your final presentation slides. Due date: May 1.

## **Departmental Research Seminars**

There are a total of nine departmental research seminars on the schedule so far this semester. This is your chance to sit in the audience and be the seminar critic. You are to go to as many departmental seminars as you can. You are free to choose which seminars to go to, but you must attend at least *six* seminars. For each seminar that you attend, turn in a 1 page typed response to the paper and its presentation. I will give extra credit if you attend and turn in responses to additional seminars. Do not just summarize the abstract of the paper, instead summarize the seminar and your thoughts about it.

- 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.

## **Tentative Schedule**

January 15. Email me a copy of your current paper (in either Word or PDF) and your latest set of presentation slides.

January 17. General comments, sign up sheets.

January 22-31. Individual meetings, see sign up sheet.

February 5-21. In the first round, you present your paper from start to the data section only. Discuss your data, the sources, and present descriptive statistics and preliminary estimates. If you are writing a theoretical paper, you can use the time to motivate your paper with examples and anecdotes of empirical relevance and extend your model. Those who are not presenting are required to read the paper and write down at least two thought-out questions that you would be prepared to ask. The format of these presentations will be the “workshop style”, i.e. you jump in with your question at what you judge to be an appropriate moment.

February 19-March 6. In your second round, you present the data section and the results and conclusions of your paper. In addition, for this second round of presentation, there will be one or two discussants assigned to the paper, each of whom will carefully read the paper give a 5 minute response and critique. The presenter is then given time to respond to the discussant’s comments. The format of these presentations will be the “conference style”, i.e., no interruptions apart from quick clarification questions, and then discussant(s) make their comments.

March 11-20. Individual meetings, see sign up sheet.

March 25-27. Spring Break, No Classes.

April 1-May 1 Final presentation of the paper from start to finish. Your main advisors will be asked to be present at this final presentation whether or not it qualifies as your comprehensive exam.

