

Syllabus: Economics 592 Fall 2011

Meetings: Tuesdays 6pm-8:30pm

Location: Lincoln Hall 101

Online: Blackboard

Nathan Anderson

Office: University Hall 716

Contact via E-mail: nba@uic.edu

Office Hours: Tue 10a-11a; Fri 1:30p-2:30p, or by appointment on Tuesdays & Fridays

Course Objectives

- Introduce the key components of the dissertation and job search process
- Identify and get to know a potential dissertation advisor
- Create an environment where you can discuss and receive feedback on your research
- Improve your writing and presentation skills through practice
- Build your research skills through practice
- Practice saying what we mean in fewer words
- Identify an original contribution and produce a first draft of a research paper
- Become an expert about something

Advisor Forms

An important component of this course is finding a professor to advise you with your work this semester and possibly beyond this semester with your dissertation. By September 13th you must identify an advisor, have this person sign the Advisor Form, and return the signed form to me during class.

Meetings with Me

You are required to meet with me at least twice during the semester. You **MUST** meet with me in the days preceding your first formal presentation of your research (Oct 11th and Oct 18th) to discuss your presentation. You must bring a draft of your presentation to this required meeting and we will review it together. I encourage you to meet regularly with your advisor.

Course Schedule and Overview

Part One: The first four weeks of the course reviews the dissertation process, discusses the job market, and introduces some professional topics. During this time you will be identifying and reading published research articles that interest you and, via

formal assignments and class discussions, thinking critically about the contributions these articles make, their empirical methods, as well as the writing style and organization of the papers. You should use these first four weeks as an opportunity to review and explore literature that informs your own research. At the end of this period you should understand the distinction between an interesting topic and original research that makes a contribution.

Part Two: During the next five weeks you will narrow your readings with the purpose of identifying a potential contribution to the literature. You will discuss with your advisor and your classmates your potential contribution. It's important to identify as early as possible your data requirements, basic econometric framework, and, possible criticisms of your proposed contribution and approach (no research is perfect!). Rest assured it is normal to have your research ideas evolve over this period and many students will cycle through several ideas before deciding on something to pursue for the remainder of the semester. Besides your own work, an important responsibility during this period is to, by listening carefully and making thoughtful comments, help your colleagues identify their own contributions.

Part Three: In the last six weeks of the course, your potential contribution identified, you will make progress on your research and produce a first draft of your research paper. During this time you will become an expert on your data, your econometric methods, and potential problems and shortcomings with your research. As before, equally important is being a responsible colleague and helping others to understand their data, methods, and potential shortcomings.

Part Four: You will make a 20-minute presentation of your original research at the weekly Economics Department seminar.

Assignments (in order of appearance)

1. Part One

1. Paper Outline #1: Select a paper published in the AER, QJE, or JPE between 2005-2011. Create an outline of the paper that is no more than five pages long. Pay special attention to the order in which the paper introduces and explains ideas. Take special interest in the introduction. How many paragraphs does it take the paper to explain what it is doing? Is there a long literature review in the introduction? What types of details does the paper provide about its data set? How many figures and tables are used, when are they discussed, and do they serve a clear purpose? How is the results section written? An example of an outline is available on Blackboard.
2. Essay on Leamer (1983) and Angrist and Pishke (2010): Your assignment is not summarize the papers but to write no more than a one page essay on your reaction to them. For example, you might write about the what you felt was the most important point of the articles or you might write about what you thought was incorrect. Alternatively, you could discuss how they articles might affect how you conduct empirical work or how you read the empirical work of other researchers.

3. Paper Outline #2 & Presentation: Select a paper published between 2000 and 2011 that appeared in a field journal and not in a general interest journal. Examples of field journals include JPubE, JHR, JoLE, JMCB, JIE, or the NTJ.
 - a. Create an outline of this paper that is no more than two pages long. Pay special attention to how and when the paper describes its contribution to the literature.
 - b. Do a 10-minute presentation of this paper for the class. This presentation must include slides (power point, beamer, keynote, etc.) and MUST describe: the paper's contribution, the paper's econometric framework, data used in the paper, and one potential problem or confusing aspect. You have only 10 minutes, this means no more than four slides and focus on the most important points. You will not be able to discuss everything and must decide what is most important.
 4. Explain an Empirical Strategy & Presentation: Select any paper, published or working paper, from between 2000 and 2011.
 - a. Write a no more than two-page explanation of the empirical strategy used in this paper. What is the paper's question? How are its data suited to answer this question? What types of analysis does the paper perform to answer its question? How does the paper provide convincing evidence in support of its thesis?
 - b. Do a 15-minute presentation of the paper's empirical strategy for the class. This presentation must include slides and MUST contain: a description of data used, at least one estimating equation, a discussion of how to interpret the results, and a discussion of how convincing the results are. This is no more than seven slides and preferably fewer.
 5. Referee Report & Presentation: Select any paper, published or working paper, from between 2009 and 2011.
 - a. Write a no more than three-page referee report on the paper.
 - b. Do a 10-minute presentation of the most important elements of your referee report. This presentation must include slides and MUST provide a brief overview of the paper and focus on between one and three of your critiques of the paper. An example of a referee report is available on Blackboard.
2. Part Two
1. Propose and Explain Your Contribution: Write a no more than a one-page summary of your research plans that explains how your idea can make a contribution to the literature (what is different and new about your idea), why you think it has never been done before, and why this contribution is important. Be concise and honest.
 2. My Methods & Data: Write a no more than a two-page description of your data and how you plan to analyze your data (from simple comparisons-of-means and figures to instrumental variables or VAR).
 3. Presentation and Discussant Report:
 - a. You will make a 20-minute presentation to your group of your work thus far. This presentation must include slides (no more than 10). The last two to three slides should focus on your plans and questions going forward. You must send your slides to your discussant by Monday at 8am.

- b. You will make a 10-minute presentation that discusses one of your colleagues presentations. This can be no more than four slides. Your presentation must summarize your colleague's presentation, discuss what is clear and what is confusing, and then offer constructive criticism and suggestions for improvements.
 4. Outline Your Paper #1: Write a no more than five-page outline of your paper. This outline is a plan for your paper and therefore includes plans for parts of your paper that are not yet complete.
3. *Part Three*
1. I Know My Data: A 15-minute presentation where you describe your data with words and simple figures and tables. You must have at least one figure and one table.
 2. My Paper Has Problems: A 15-minute presentation where you discuss the two most important shortcomings of your paper.
 3. Outline Your Paper #2 (And Goals): Write a no more than four-page outline of your paper. On an additional page, describe the as yet unfinished tasks you expect to complete by the end of the semester. When writing this outline make sure to explain clearly your contribution and its importance.
 4. Presentation and Discussant Report: same as above.
4. *Part Four*
1. Paper Draft: You will hand in a **PDF** of your paper draft. This is not expected to be a completed paper and it is acceptable to have sections of the paper that are not yet complete.
 2. Presentation at Department Seminar: You will make a 20-minute presentation of your research progress and plans at the Department seminar.

Grading

Each part of the course represents 25% of your grade and your grade for each part is based on the entirety of your work in that part. Failure to complete any assignments without prior permission results in an 5% point reduction in your grade. Final grades will emphasize progress as well as final product.

Note: This syllabus represents a plan for the course and may be changed at any time.

In accordance with the Americans with Disability Act, students with a documented disability may request reasonable accommodations that they might need to participate fully in class. Students may be eligible for: exam modifications, alternative print formats, sign language interpreting, real-time captioning, class relocations, assistance with academic modifications, access problem solving, advocacy and referrals, or other reasonable accommodations.

If you have questions or need assistance in acquiring access and accommodations, the Office of Disability Services is available to assist faculty and students at (312) 413 2183

(voice) or (312) 413 0123 (TTY only). The Office of Disability Services works to ensure the accessibility of UIC programs, classes, and services to students with disabilities. Services are available for students who have documented learning disabilities, vision or hearing impairments, emotional or physical disabilities.

Course Plan

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments Discussed This Week	Due This Week
1	8/23	Writing a Dissertation and Finding a Job. Topics include: job market paper, job market process, dissertation process, finding an advisor.	Advisor Form, Paper Outline	Nothing
2	8/30	Finding a Topic, Identifying a Contribution, Writing a Research Paper, Making a Presentation, and the Publication Process	Essay on Leamer (1983) and Angrist and Pishke (2010), Paper Outline #2	Paper Outline # 1
3	9/6	You Will Be Judged: Econometrics For A Skeptical Audience	Explain an Empirical Strategy & Presentation	Essay, Paper Outline #2, and Presentation

4	9/13	Let's Get Critical: Writing a Referee Report and Discussing a Paper at a Professional Conference. Group Workshop #1	Referee Report and Presentation	Strategy Explanation, Presentation, and Advisor Form
5	9/20	Group Workshop #2	Propose and Explain Your Contribution	Referee report and Presentation
6	9/27	Group Workshop #3	My Methods & Data Essay	Propose and Explain Your Contribution
7	10/4	Group Workshop #4	Presentation and Discussant Assignments	My Methods & Data Essay
8	10/11	Presentations and Discussants	Presentation and Discussant Assignments	Presentation and Discussant Reports
9	10/18	Presentations and Discussants	Outline Your Paper #1	Presentation and Discussant Reports
10	10/25	Group Workshop #5	I Know My Data: Report	Outline Your Paper #1
11	11/1	Group Workshop #6	My Paper Has Problems	I Know My Data: Report
12	11/8	Group Workshop #7	Outline Your Paper #2 and Clarify Your Goal For the Semester	My Paper Has Problems
13	11/15	Group Workshop #8	Presentation and Discussant Assignments	Outline Your Paper #2 and Goals

14	11/22	Presentations & Discussants	Presentation and Discussant Assignments	Presentation and Discussant Reports
15	11/29	Presentations & Discussants	Paper Draft	Presentation and Discussant Reports
Finals	12/6	Presentations	None	Paper Draft