Introduction to Economic Research

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What do I have to know to get started in this class? ECON 311 or ECON 315

What is this course about? In this class, we will survey the methods of research commonly used by economists and explore applications of each method. Students will then have some of the tools necessary to access and understand the economics literature. We will work on “thinking like an economist,” and go beyond summarizing papers to evaluating data and evidence. Throughout the course we will discuss the research and writing process. This is a Writing Intensive Course.

What will I be able to do at the end of the course?

1. Locate published research and data in economics.
2. Summarize the economic literature on a particular topic.
3. Critically evaluate an economics journal article.
4. Describe alternative economic research methods and how they are used to help answer economic questions.
5. Conduct a research study on an economic topic and present the results orally and in a formal paper.

What tools do I need? A good dictionary, thesaurus, and the following required materials:


Readings Packet for ECON 428, will be available at the OSU Bookstore soon. Some readings are available on the web (see reading list) and will not be in the packet.
How will I be able to demonstrate my knowledge?

The box below shows the course requirements, due dates, and point values. Guidelines for the journal article analysis and term paper are attached at the end of the syllabus. There will also be short ungraded assignments in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of journal article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written report</td>
<td>T, May 3</td>
<td>(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral report</td>
<td>May 3 or 5</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft (optional)</td>
<td>R, May 19</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback provided</td>
<td>T, May 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final written paper</td>
<td>T, May 31</td>
<td>(35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral report</td>
<td>May 31 or June 2</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive final</td>
<td>M, June 6, 9:30 am</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total points available</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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What are the rules?

**Grading**
For the journal article analysis and term paper, late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 50% per calendar day late. The final exam will be at the scheduled time listed in the Schedule of Classes. If you miss the final without my approval, you will receive a score of zero on the final. Final grades will be assigned according to a curve of the total points, or according to the traditional scale, whichever yields the higher grade. There is no extra credit work available.

**Academic Dishonesty**
Plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, and facilitating the academic dishonesty of others are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam or paper, failure in the course, and/or expulsion from the university. Refer to the Schedule of Classes for more information.

**Disruptive Behavior**
Behaviors that are disruptive to teaching and learning will not be tolerated, and will be referred to the Student Conduct Program for disciplinary action. Behaviors that create a hostile, offensive or intimidating environment based on gender, race, ethnicity, color, religion, age, disability, marital status or sexual orientation will be referred to the Affirmative Action Office.

**Disabilities**
If you have a documented disability which requires special arrangements, please inform me as soon as possible. To obtain university documentation for a disability, contact Services for Students with Disabilities.
Course Outline

Week(s) Topic and Assignment

I 0. Preliminaries – Writing mechanics and style

*Strunk and White (2000) - http://oregonstate.edu/dept/english/resources.htm – skim through and note rules and ideas that you do not know. Before a writing assignment, review these rules.

If you don’t understand a rule, or you would like to practice, see the following website: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~compose/student/ac_paper/grammar.html

I 1. Introduction

*BCW, Part I

A. Why do research?
B. Writing, thinking and research
C. The research process


I 2. What is good research?

A. Nobel Laureates

1. See the Nobel e-Museum http://www.nobel.se/economics/laureates/index.html
2. 2001 Laureate


Readings on the reading list that are contained in the readings packet are highlighted. Other readings are available on the web (websites are listed) or in the required resources for the course [Booth, Colomb, and Williams (BCW) and Strunk and White]. Required readings are preceded by an asterisk.
Week(s) Topic and Assignment

1 II. **What is good research?** (continued)

B. Classics: The “Father of Economics” speaks

Entire book can be downloaded from: [http://www.library.adelaide.edu.au/etext/s/s64w/s64w.zip](http://www.library.adelaide.edu.au/etext/s/s64w/s64w.zip) (Download, unzip, and click on index.html navigate from Table of Contents.)

*Required reading: Smith, Introduction and Book 1, Chs. 1 and 2.

1-2 III. **Asking questions – How do I find a topic?**

*BCW, Part II, Prologue and Chs. 3-4

2 IV. **Finding answers**

A. Finding and evaluating sources

*BCW, Chs. 5-6


B. Finding journal articles


2-3 V. **Methodology and the culture of the economics profession**

A. Positive, normative, and applied economics


Weeks Topic and Assignment

3 V.B. Economists – Who are we?


http://oasis.ors t.edu/search/tJournal+of+Econom ic+Education/tjournal+of+economic+educa
tion/1,1,2,E/856&FF=tjournal+of+economic+education&2,,2,1,0/indexsort=-


4 VI. Making and supporting a claim

*BCW, Part III (Read this before writing your journal article analysis. It will help you to be able to evaluate the validity of your article.)

4-5 VII. Articles that survey a body of literature

http://oasis.ors t.edu/search/tJournal+of+Economic+Perspectives/tjournal+of+economic+pers
cpectives/1,3,3,E/856&FF=tjournal+of+economic+perspectives&1,1,1,0/indexsort=-

http://oasis.ors t.edu/search/tJournal+of+Economic+Perspectives/tjournal+of+economic+pers
cpectives/1,3,3,E/856&FF=tjournal+of+economic+perspectives&1,1,1,0/indexsort=-

5 VIII. Solving research problems with theory


Journal article analysis due Tuesday, May 3, oral reports all week.
7  IX.  Regression analysis


7-8  X.  Cost-benefit analysis

*BCW, Part IV, pp. 185-219, Ch. 14


8  XI.  Conducting your own survey

*Sallant and Dillman, Ch. 1.

9  XII.  Game theory and experimental economics


**GUIDELINES for JOURNAL ARTICLE ANALYSIS**

Your analysis of an economics article should first summarize the article, then critique it, and relate it to a possible paper topic for you. I recommend that you read BCW through Ch.11 before analyzing the article, and that you use the following format.

1. **Write a summary of a journal article** of your choice. Your audience is your classmates; aim your writing to the level of knowledge of a senior who is an economics major. Your tone should be professional (not familiar). The summary should be 2-3 pages (typed double-spaced in 10- or 12-point font) and should include the following elements:
   - Complete citation of the article
   - Primary question(s) addressed in the paper
   - Method used to analyze the question (e.g., the author estimates a demand equation; conducts a cost-benefit analysis; uses game theory)
   - Data source, if relevant
   - Results, focusing on the implications for the primary question(s)
   - Policy implications and areas of future research, if any, from the author’s viewpoint.

2. **Evaluate the article.** Was there sufficient evidence to support the conclusions in the article about the primary question(s)? Explain your reasoning.

3. **Relate the article to your paper.** Do you think that you will use information in this article for your paper? How does it fit in with your paper topic?

4. **Attach a copy** of the article.
GUIDELINES for PAPER

The information provided in The Craft of Research is your best guide to writing an effective paper. By the end of the term, all chapters will be required with the exception of Ch.15, which is optional, and pp. 289-295.

Length

The recommended length of the paper is 15 pages, double-spaced with 1" margins and 10-12 characters per inch typescript. Content, not length, is the criteria for grading. Do not waste time adjusting margins and changing typescript size to fit the length guidelines; these are guidelines, not requirements.

Formats

You may choose from two formats:

1. Literature survey, a shortened version of papers like those on sports and gambling that we discussed in class. Literature surveys should contain an introduction, literature review and analysis, conclusion, and bibliography.

2. Position paper, which states and defends a position. Position papers should contain an introduction, review of evidence supporting the author's position, review of counter-evidence and any evidence discrediting counter-evidence, conclusion, and bibliography.

Grading Criteria for Papers

Factors affecting the grade on your term papers include content, writing clarity and flow, use of academic sources versus the popular press, extent of learning demonstrated, objectivity, and analysis. Lee Hansen’s paper lists steps in cognition from basic to advanced. Grades will be higher for papers exhibiting knowledge toward the advanced end of the spectrum.