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Economics 260, Industrial Organization III Spring 2025

Course overview

This is the last course in the industrial organization (IO) sequence. Instead of covering a few more selected topics in industrial organization, this course is oriented toward transitioning students into research. We strongly recommend the class to students in the economics department and the GSB who intend to write theses or publish papers in IO. The class may also be useful for students working in other applied fields who wish to learn about the approaches to economic questions and empirical methods that are used in IO. We view the main goal of this class as to help you write an initial research paper in the field. Course requirements are focused on turning students into scholars through active, enthusiastic and well prepared class participation, research presentations, and a term paper.

There is a considerable change in process and focus from the earlier courses in IO, and the course has a number of active-researcher deadlines for students. In this class, students will build the skills needed to pursue a research project including broad topic identification, narrowing a topic to a researchable question, applying constructive criticism to the existing literature, identification of theoretical ideas that are relevant, location and procurement of data, construction of a relevant model, and drafting of research proposals and early versions of papers. The organizational model of the course is learning-by-doing.

Students should come to the organizational meeting (the first class, on Monday, March 31), and then should e-mail us a memo about their research project, following the guidelines we circulated by e-mail, **by 12pm on April 1**. While memos are likely to vary based on the specific research project, all memos should include:

- A broad topic area in which they plan to research, and the beginnings of a research question. Be prepared to explain these to the class.
- A paper or short list of papers from the research literature(s) relevant to the topic, suitable for presentation and discussion in class.

We will also use this memo as an opportunity to touch base with you if we are concerned that your proposed project is either too far afield to be a good fit with this course, or that it is too unfocused and therefore too premature to benefit from two months of intense work on it.

We've divided the quarter into two main segments. The first set of classes will be discussions led by students on recent research papers salient to your research proposals. The second set will be presentations by students about their own research projects. We will provide ample written feedback and schedule time to meet with you one-on-one (that is, two-on-one...) in connection with each of your presentations.

Writing a term paper is central to the process of converting into a researcher. We have put in place a structured process for writing a term paper with the due dates described below.

Detailed Class Schedule

(preliminary; to be adjusted based on number of students)

The class meets on Mon and Wed 8:30-10:30am, and occasionally on Fri 8:30-10:30am, all in P101 at the GSB. We will not use all 30 meeting slots during the quarter, but expect students to attend all meetings, so please make sure to note the dates below on your calendars.

Mon, March 31: Organizational Meeting

Wed, April 2: Individual meetings during the morning to discuss paper topics (we will post a link to a Google Doc sign-up sheet) (NOTE: memo due the day before)

Presentations of existing papers in the literature by students (we may schedule more dates, depending on number of students):

Mon, April 14

Wed, April 16

Fri, April 18

Mon, April 21

Wed, April 23

Fri, April 25

Mon, April 28

Wed, April 30

Presenters: be sure to distribute a link to the paper you will present a week in advance to all course participants, to send us a first draft of your slides at least 72 hours in advance, and to distribute your slides 24 hours in advance. Non-presenters, be sure to have read the paper and be prepared to discuss in detail.

Thu-Fri, May 1-2: Individual meetings to discuss paper proposals

Tue, May 13: Individual meetings to discuss paper drafts

Presentations of Student Research Papers:

Fri, May 16

Mon, May 19

Wed, May 21

Fri, May 23

Wed, May 28
Mon, June 2
Wed, June 4
Fri, June 6

Presenters: be sure to send us a first draft of your slides at least 72 hours in advance, and to distribute your slides 24 hours in advance. Non-presenters, be sure to have read the slides/paper and be prepared to discuss in detail.

Sun, June 8, midnight: Term paper due (no extensions!)

Deadlines

Tuesday, April 1, by noon (prior to the first meeting). One page description of your likely paper topic. Ideal content includes (i) a description of the topic area; (ii) a specific research question, not yet answered; (iii) a description, with cites, of the literatures that came closest to answering the question; and (iv) a specific suggestion of either data suitable for estimating a model answering the question or a conjectured theorem.

Wednesday, April 30, by noon (prior to your May 1 meeting). Detailed paper proposal. Progress relative to the earlier description should include (i) a careful statement of what has been accomplished in the earlier research literature(s) and why that does not answer the question at hand, and either (ii.a) reporting the mean of the dependent variable(s) for an empirical project, or (ii.b) a proof of the conjectured theorem. Proposal should start with a 1-page cover letter, which summarizes what you worked on changing/doing since we last talked, what worked and didn't work, and what questions you'd like to focus our meeting on.

Monday, May 12, by noon (prior to your May 13 meeting). "Draft" of a term paper. At this point, you should turn in or email a complete set of slides for your upcoming presentation in class, and have sketched out a very rough draft of the paper, which could be in bullet point form. Draft should start with a 1-page cover letter, which summarizes what you worked on changing/doing since we last talked, what worked and didn't work, and what questions you'd like to focus our meeting on.

Sunday, June 8, by midnight. Paper due, no exceptions.