

Liran Einav, leinav@stanford.edu
Heidi Williams, hlwill@stanford.edu

Economics 260, Industrial Organization III Spring 2020

Course overview

This is the last course in the industrial organization (IO) sequence. Instead of covering several more selected topics in industrial organization, the emphasis is on transitioning students into research. We strongly recommend the class to students in the economics department 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 various approaches to economic questions and empirical methods used in IO. We view this class as having as its main goal helping 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 it to a researchable question, constructive criticism of 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, April 6th) with the following:

- 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've divided the quarter into two main segments. The first set of classes will be discussions led by students, and then as needed by us, on recent research papers salient to your research proposals. The second segment will be presentations by students about their own research projects. We will schedule time to meet with you one-on-one (that is, two-on-one...) in connection with 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 due dates described below.

Detailed Class Schedule

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

The class meets on Mon and Wed 11:30-1:30 at Room 218, and occasionally on Fri 1:30-4:30pm at Room 351 (both rooms are in the Economics Building). We will not use all 30 slots, but expect students to attend all meetings, so please make sure to note the dates below on your calendars.

Mon, April 6: Organizational Meeting (NOTE: HOMEWORK DUE AT THIS MEETING)

Wed, April 8: Individual meetings during the afternoon to discuss paper topics (we will post a link to a Google Doc sign-up sheet)

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

Mon, April 13

Wed, April 15

Fri, April 17

Mon, April 20

Wed, April 22

Fri, April 24

Presenters: be sure to distribute a link to the paper you will present a week in advance to all course participants and to distribute your slides 24 hours in advance (12 hours is not 24 ...). Non-presenters, be sure to have read the paper and be prepared to discuss in detail.

Mon, April 27: Individual meetings to discuss paper proposals

Fri, May 8: Individual meetings to discuss draft papers

Presentations of Student Research Papers:

Wed, May 13

Mon, May 18

Wed, May 20

Fri, May 22

Mon, June 1

Wed, June 3

Presenters: be sure to distribute a link to the paper you will present a week in advance to all course participants and to distribute your slides 24 hours in advance (12 hours is not 24 ...). Non-presenters, be sure to have read the paper and be prepared to discuss in detail.

Fri, June 12, midnight: Term paper due (no extensions!)

Deadlines

Monday, April 6: see above

Tuesday, April 7, by midnight (remember to bring a copy to your April 8 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.

Sunday, April 26, by midnight (remember to bring two copies to your April 27 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.

Thursday, May 7, by midnight (remember to bring two copies to your May 8 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.

Friday, June 12, by midnight. Paper due, no exceptions.