

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Departament d'Economia Aplicada

PhD Program in Applied Economics
Academic year: 2011-2012

Graduate course:

Introduction to research methods in economics

Instructor:

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Objective

This module aims at providing some basic research criteria to post-graduate students. It will deliver operative tools for choosing a dissertation topic, selecting research questions and addressing them with the more suitable theoretical or/and empirical techniques, and, finally, interpreting and writing the results.

The structure of the course can be ideally split into two components. The former will be devoted to prepare students for the dissertation stage (choice of a research topic and planning of a research project). The latter will focus on familiarizing students with the canonical research techniques.

The scope is to provide a good support to students to make them pass from merely learning about the existing research literature to proposing original contributions in the economic field they are interested in.

Prerequisite: A basic knowledge of the standard econometric, macro and micro tools is required.

Working language: English

Schedule: This is a short course (about 15 hours): we will schedule the meetings in accordance with the degree of learning of the participants.

Outline:

Course 1: Research Methodology.

Topics of research in (applied) economics and research pillars. Economic research process. Data sources. Writing up a research proposal or a research project.

Course 2: Writing a research essay.

Define a research plan. Choose a key target. Dealing with the literature review

Graduate course:
Applied Research Tools

Course 3: Working on a path-breaking paper

Critical learning process: how to deal with the economic results and exploit them.

Outline for a critical review and further open research questions.

Suggested article:

Avinash K. Dixit and Joseph E. Stiglitz

“Monopolistic Competition and Optimum Product Diversity”

The American Economic Review, Vol. 67, No. 3 (Jun., 1977), pp. 297-308.

Course 4-5: Discussion research review-essays

Evaluation:

The evaluation will be based on the active participation during the classes and on critical review of a research article that will be handled in class.

Each participant will be required to choose one article (from the list below or another article agreed upon with the instructor) he/she feels more comfortable with and write a brief critical review following the scheme discussed in class. Finally, each review will be discussed in class.

Suggested articles:

[1] Krugman, Paul (1991):“Increasing Returns and Economic Geography” *The Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 99(3), pp. 483-499.”

[2] Ciccone, Antonio and Hall, Robert E, (1996):“Productivity and the Density of Economic Activity”, *American Economic Review*, , vol. 86(1), pages 54-70.

[3] Cassiman, Bruno and Veugelers, Reinhilde (2002):“R&D Cooperation and Spillovers: Some Empirical Evidence from Belgium”, *American Economic Review*, Vol. 92(4),pp. 1169-1184.

[4] Esteban, Joan, and Debraj Ray (2008): "On the Saliency of Ethnic Conflict." *American Economic Review*, vol. 98(5): 2185–2202.

[5] Peri, Giovanni and Sparber, Chad (2009): "Task Specialization, Immigration, and Wages," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, vol. 1(3), pages 135-69, July.

Any further suggestion for alternative articles must be discussed with the instructor well in advance.

Suggested readings

[A-P] J.D. Angrist and J.- S. Pischke: “*Mostly Harmless Econometrics*” (2009), Princeton University Press,

[Th] W. Thomson: “*A Guide for the Young Economist*” (2003), MIT Press [Bibl. Economiques UAB: E 1.10 Tho]

[Ch] Chandrasekhar, R.: “*How to write a thesis: a working guide*” (2002), available at <http://ciips.ee.uwa.edu.au/pub/HowToWriteAThesis.pdf> .