

Royal Military College of Canada
Department of Politics and Economics

Economics Seminar

ECE492B

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Prerequisites and objectives:

The seminar course requires each student to undertake research paper on an approved subject. Students will prepare and present a project proposal, will present their final papers, and will comment and critique work presented by their peers. Students will be expected to spend time reading complicated academic journal articles and will also be expected to actively participate in the learning process. The course presumes that you have completed all your economics courses and that you have some basic understanding of econometrics.

Writing good Economics papers

No one can basically tell you how to write a good economics papers – It's really easy if you know the theory of economics paper writing. A lot of students always keep guessing what should they do to get the economics paper right, but it really isn't that hard, if you follow a couple tips and tricks on how to do a good economics paper. You will be happy with your paper, as well as your professor will be happy to read a perfect economics paper.

The first and maybe the most important part of your work is to find a topic for your economics paper. You have to pick a balanced topic, that interest you but at the same time a topic, which is easy to do a research on. Just remember that a good prepared economics paper on a simpler topic is much more effective than a paper with mediocre

text on a hard topic and your grade depends on that. The second part of your work has to deal with the chosen topic and the planning of your economics paper. You have to structure your text in a proper way, in order to do a good economics paper. With a good outline for your economics paper roughly half of the work is done, and all that you have to do is to spend some time putting all together main ideas retrieved from your reading part and think over every sentence in your great economics paper.

To help you best understand what you have to do in this seminar here is a brief guide on how to write your Papers:

I. Finding A Topic

In many ways, generating an interesting and plausible topic is the hardest part of writing an economics paper. After you come up with a testable idea or hypothesis (and find data to test it), then the rest is relatively straightforward.

First read some working papers, you can find tons of them just by ‘googling’ your topic or you may go to: www.jstor.org or <http://ideas.repec.org> and try to find some new papers on your topic. Having an idea of what economists are working on in the field will give you some sense of where the current boundaries of the field are, what data exists, what questions still need to be addressed, and what’s interesting and doable. It may be the case that the fundamentals of older studies in the literature have changed (so you could run the same tests with new data or data from other countries). For instance, perhaps the seminal paper on social interaction has changed in the post-facebook era. Also, perhaps a study in the literature leaves some question unanswered or incorrectly/insufficiently analyzed. Thinking about the limitations of other papers can often help generate topic ideas.

If you have found a general topic or paper that you like, but are looking for a more specific and testable idea, asking “What should we expect if this is the case?” can be really helpful. Thinking about the intensity of effects is a good extension of the “what should we expect” strategy. Usually, you can improve or extend a difference-in-difference paper by thinking about the conditions under which the treatment will be most intense.

III. Paper Outline

Although you will get a better sense of how papers are structured in the subfield of economics that you are focusing on from its literature, this is an outline that’s pretty common across subfields. In a sense, writing your paper amounts to filling out this template. Have these questions and talking points in mind when you are working and thinking about your topic, it might save you from a lot of unnecessary work.

1. Introduction (1 to 2 pages)

- What is the question?
- Why is it interesting?
- What do we already know (briefly)?
- What specifically do you do to answer the question?
- Preview Results

2. Literature Review (up to 3 pages)

- Exhaustive outline of previous work in the area
- Tip: find a few, relevant papers from the literature (3 -5 not less and eventually not more) and look at how they put together their literature review, what they cite, and what level of detail they go into compared with other papers. (Also look at the papers' reference)

3. Methodology/Strategy (up to 5 pages)

- Detailed description of what you intend to do to answer your question.
- If empirical, describe the regression specification and explain how you get identification.

4. Data

- Describe your data.
- Where is it from?
- Table of descriptive statistics.
- What manipulations do you need to perform?
- What are the limitations of the data?

5. Results (2-3 pages)

- Present your findings (with graph, Tables, ...)
- Discuss and analyze what they mean/show

6. Conclusion (about 1 page)

- Review the paper
- Tell us why these results are important
- Highlight limitations or ways to push this idea further in other studies (example: further studies on the topic should explore X, Y, or Z extension).

➔ For more Tips for Writing Economics Essays See:
http://www.mdouch.net/teaching_e.html.

Course outline and timing:

- Read 4 to 5 papers in the field and chose a topic (with your Advisor),
- Write a small literature review based on your reading,
- Model setting and data presentations
- Write a small presentation of your work (+ oral presentations in class by week 7),
→ 25% of your final mark
- Modeling and testing stage,
- Results + write your paper
- Final oral presentations (Economics Profs) by week 13 → 50 % of your final mark.
- 25% for your Advisor

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic ethics, is a serious academic infraction for which penalties may range from a recorded caution to expulsion from the College. The RMCC Academic Regulations Section 23 defines plagiarism as: “Using the work of others and attempting to present it as original thought, prose or work. This includes failure to appropriately acknowledge a source, misrepresentation of cited work, and misuse of quotation marks or attribution.” It also includes “the failure to acknowledge that work has been submitted for credit elsewhere.” All students should consult the published statements on Academic Misconduct contained in the *Royal Military College of Canada Undergraduate Calendar*, Section 23.

Good Luck