

Econ 281 (Special Topics in Economics)/Econ 285 (Pre-Candidacy Presentations)

Instructors: Julian Betts (Sequoyah 248) and Richard Carson (Econ 323)

Class Times: Tuesday 11:00-12:20 and Tuesday 2:00-3:20
Thursday 2:00-3:20

Class Meeting Location: Econ 304

1. Course grades are based on the quality of the third year original paper (Econ 281) and the quality of the presentation (Econ 285). **Attendance is mandatory and grades will be docked for excessive absences and/or failure to participate in class discussions.**

2. The first organizational meeting for these two (linked) classes will take place on Thursday September 25 at 2:30-3:20 pm. (Note special one time 2:30 start time.)

The main order of business will be: (a) discussion of what is expected in the initial draft of the third year original paper for Econ 285, (b) a discussion of the presentations related to that paper that are required for Econ 281, (c) choosing a scheduling director among the from class members to help the coordinate the order of the presentations. [Pareto improving changes in the presentation order are always permitted. In the absence of a better plan we will do reverse alphabetical order. One possibility we would like to encourage is that students group themselves on the schedule by area of study, so that at the final presentations in November/December we can have the key professors in the given area attend the talks.]

3. On Tuesday, September 30, 2-3:20 PM, there will be presentations by various faculty members who are used to reviewing (as journal editors) a wide range of papers. They have seen the good, the bad and the ugly. Come prepared with questions. Make sure to formally invite your advisor to attend your presentation.

4. First Student Presentations

On October 2, 7 (both classes), and 14 (both classes), there will be presentations on paper proposals. Your presentation should be 15 minutes. There will also be 5 minutes of class discussion after your 15-minute presentation.

5. One-page abstract/advisor/workshop signup deadline: Oct. 14 in class

You will need to hand in a detailed one-page abstract or outline of your proposed research paper (including your **advisor's name**) in class on October 14. You should also note which lunch workshop you are attending and which afternoon seminar(s) you are signed up for. This is the best way to see new work in your area of economics and you are strongly encouraged to make a short presentation to a lunch workshop to get feedback for those working in your area.

6. Advice on getting advice

After your presentation you should meet frequently with your advisor and other faculty members in your field. Senior graduate students and visitors are also a good source of advice. Arrange to go to dinner with an outside seminar speaker working in your area. Betts and Carson will hold both hold extended office hours during subsequent class periods to discuss conceptual/practical problems with papers including changing topics. Please do drop by early and often to our office hours. Waiting until week 8 is suboptimal!

7. Office hours

Our office hours consist of all days/times scheduled for class when we are not meeting formally as a class. (That is, Tue 11-12:20, 2-3:20, and Thursday 2-3:20) Additionally, if this is not convenient for you feel free to set up an appointment to see one or both of us by email. Betts will hold his office hours in the Chair's office Sequoyah 248 while Carson is in Econ 323.

Exceptions to office hours

- i) The first exception is weeks when we are holding official classes (weeks 1 and 2 and weeks 9 and 10, roughly speaking – see below). But we are happy to speak to you after class or by appointment these weeks.
- ii) On Thursday Oct. 9, Betts will be out of town but Carson will hold his regular office hours.
- iii) On Thursday, October 16 Carson will be out of town but Betts will hold office hours.
- iv). On Thursday, October 30 only Carson will hold office hours.
- v) . Note there is no class on Tuesday November 11th (Veterans Day holiday).
- vi) . On November 13, only Carson will hold extended office hours.
- vii) Instead of office hours, on November 20, there will be a presentation on how to make presentations aimed primarily at non-native speakers but potentially valuable to many of you. This is mandatory if a non-native speaker and optional for others.
- viii) November 25 and later: all regular class times will be used for presentations. Feel free to email us to set up meetings outside class during this period.

8. Final Presentations

Starting November 25 and running through the final exam week, there will be 30 minute presentations on your paper plus 10 minutes of discussion. Each paper will have an assigned discussant. Note that Thursday November 27 is Thanksgiving and there will be no class. During final exam week our scheduled times are December 10th, 11:30-2:30 and December 11th 3:00-6:00. We may not need to use all of these times for presentations.

Summary of presentation times:

Initial presentations (3-4 students per class)

- ___ Thurs. Oct. 2
- ___ Tue. Oct 7 morning
- ___ Tue Oct 7 afternoon
- ___ Tue. Oct 14 morning

___ Tue. Oct 14 afternoon

Final presentations (2 students per class)

___ Tue. Nov. 25 morning

___ Tue. Nov. 25 afternoon

___ Tue. Dec. 2 morning

___ Tue. Dec. 2 afternoon

___ Thurs. Dec, 4 afternoon

___ Wed. Dec. 10 11:30-2:30

___ Thurs. Dec. 11 3-6

9. Paper deadline:

On or before December 12th, you will need to hand in two hard copies of the working (and hopefully fairly readable) version of your paper one each to the mailboxes of Betts and Carson. It is acceptable at this point for parts of the paper to be incomplete. If an empirical paper, you should expect to have at least some basic results demonstrating that you have the data in hand and have gone beyond exploring its main features. For a subsection of the paper which is largely incomplete, there should be a short description of what you intend to do and what the main problems experience to date with this subsection are.

Class Objectives

The main goal of the class (Econ 281) is to have a good “first” draft of a dissertation chapter (and paper for submission to a journal). During the second quarter of this class you will “finish” and “polish” this paper. Ideally during the spring quarter or by the end of the summer you will be able to defend a dissertation proposal of which this first chapter will be a major component.

The key challenges you face are coming up with a good idea (while abandoning or putting off other ideas) and then making consistent progress on your paper throughout the quarter. In the spring you completed a literature review in the area you are interested in doing your dissertation so you should now be at a good point in starting your own original research.

This initial presentation should briefly review the literature that you are building upon. It should describe the nature of the original contribution that you intend to make and why this contribution is important. The key issues that you need to resolve should be described in some detail. If your paper is a theoretical one, you will need to note its practical economic implications/applications. If your paper is an empirical one, you will need to briefly describe its theoretical underpinnings

You were asked in spring of your second year to select an advisor, and you should work closely with this advisor during this quarter. Please talk to us right away if you do not have an advisor or are switching areas and without an advisor appropriate for your intended research area. In most instances, the person who is currently your advisor will become your dissertation advisor. In other instances, you may want to choose a different faculty member for your advisor if your main job market paper moves in a different direction but even in this instance it is likely that your advisor for this paper will be a good choice as a member of your dissertation committee.

The other major goal (Econ 285) is to become comfortable presenting and discussing your work in front of a general economics audience. You should think of your audience as the one you will have on the job market, a group of economics faculty members with a broad range of interests and where the date of their Ph.D.'s span the range of recent to the distant past, many, shocking as it may be, dating back to the last millenium. Remember they are not specialists in your topic (as might be the case in the lunch or afternoon seminars). You have to spell it out for the listener/reader and most importantly convince the audience that you are working on an interesting *and important* problem. Whether the paper is theoretical or empirical it is useful to have a simplified example that gets at the main economic intuition behind what you are interested in. Give references to the existing literature starting with the broad area to help bring reader into context but do not devote most of your presentation to a literature review. Be clear about what you expect to find and where you think the main problems in getting there lie.

You should think about presentation style for your paper. Powerpoint is most often used but is not always the best option. Some students find it easier to convert files to pdf. Transparencies can be good, particularly if you write on them. Make sure you use large fonts (16+) for Powerpoint, pdf's or transparencies. Avoid too many equations and too much text. Your presentation should be well organized and you should practice making it several times. When we write "practice", we really do mean to practice out loud. This is the only sure way to time your talk. You must not go overly long or you will be cut off before you reach your conclusion.

When using slides, presenters often have a tendency to turn towards the screen and read their slides. This is NOT a good way to connect with your audience. Instead, glance at the screen of your laptop or refer to printouts as necessary, while engaging your audience. Get your fellow graduate students to critique how you sound. Make out a list of questions you think you are likely to get asked and know how to answer them.

Treat your classmates as the colleagues they are. If you have had trouble solving a specific problem, be it theoretical or empirical, do not be shy in this class of spelling it out. Ideas often emerge from the group discussion that can help you solve such problems.

Sign up sheets

NAME: _____

Field of research

(e.g. macro, econometrics, public, theory, labor): _____

Detach and hand in to the volunteer coordinator.

Please list below your top 4 preferences for days/times to do your initial presentation, with 1) indicating your top choice and 4 your least favorite choice.

Initial presentations (3-4 students per class)

- ___ Thurs. Oct. 2
- ___ Tue. Oct 7 morning
- ___ Tue Oct 7 afternoon
- ___ Tue. Oct 14 morning
- ___ Tue. Oct 14 afternoon

Final presentations (2 students per class)

List your top 6 preferences with 1 signifying top choice

- ___ Tue. Nov. 25 morning
- ___ Tue. Nov. 25 afternoon
- ___ Tue. Dec. 2 morning
- ___ Tue. Dec. 2 afternoon
- ___ Thurs. Dec, 4 afternoon
- ___ Wed. Dec. 10 11:30-2:30
- ___ Thurs. Dec. 11 3-6