

Economics 890-4
Applied Microeconomics Early Stage Dissertation Workshop
2016-17 Academic Year

Brian McManus
mcmanusb@unc.edu

Phone: 966-5392
Office: Gardner 200C

Meeting Time: Thursdays 12:30pm – 1:45pm

Class location: Gardner 001

Office Hours: Mondays 9:30-11:30 and by appointment in Gardner 200C

Course goals and organization

This course is designed for students who are in the early stages of developing their independent research. Our objectives are to help students develop research skills, identify dissertation research topics, and communicate about research with other scholars.

We will engage in a variety of activities. During most class meetings, each student will have the opportunity to discuss their research interests, progress, and setbacks. The instructor and other students will provide feedback.

Students will present their research in a variety of ways. During each semester, each student will make two or more presentations of their work, and their classmates will provide written feedback. Some details about these presentations are provided below; other details will be determined as the course progresses.

Throughout all activities, it is very important for all students to provide feedback and suggestions to their classmates. Novel research is often a highly collaborative activity, even when a single author's name appears on a paper. Learning how to give and receive comments is a central goal of this course.

In addition to attending 890-4 activities, enrolled students are required to attend and participate in the Applied Micro Dissertation Workshop (Econ 985). See below for other requirements related to Econ 985.

Course requirements [grade share]

1. Presentations and preliminary papers [35%]

Each student will give at least one 45-60 minute presentation during each semester. During a presentation, the student will lead the audience through discussion of a research topic or project. The

presentation will be accompanied by a paper that the presenting student must post to Sakai in advance. Papers are due at noon on Monday of the same week as the Thursday presentation.

The instructor may also assign a student to give a short presentation (10-15 minutes) of his or her research progress or on a focused set of ideas.

Students will have at least two weeks between the scheduling of their “long” presentation and the presentation day itself. Short presentations may be assigned with one week’s notice.

2. Written comments [35%]

All student participants are required to provide comments for their fellow 890-4 students’ long presentations. Students will post their comments to Sakai.

Students in 890-4 will also prepare comments on two 985 speakers per semester. The instructor and student will work collaboratively to determine which 985 speakers would be most constructive for each 890-4 student.

The written evaluation should be prepared like a referee report on a journal submission. These comments should be substantive with regard to the paper’s economic content and modeling, as well as constructive with regard to exposition and style. Provide the type of detail that you would like to receive yourself. Your comments should also include a summary of the paper, so that the writer knows whether the main points were understood. The bulk of the report, however, should be a critical analysis of the paper.

Some questions to address in these written comments include:

- What is done well in the paper?
- What needs to be clarified?
- Does the question seem relevant to you? Is it well-motivated?
- Does the model make sense and are the assumptions reasonable?
- Has the author identified the effect they claim to identify?

In addition to the written comments described above, students are encouraged to provide written or verbal feedback to a presenter after his or her talk.

3. Participation and discussion [30%]

All student participants are expected to participate in all class activities. During presentations, students are expected to listen closely, ask clarifying questions, and make constructive suggestions. During our regular discussions of research progress, students should clearly describe their own progress and challenges, and comment constructively on other students’ reports to the group.

Students enrolled in Econ 890-4 are expected to attend Econ 985 as well.