Economics 607
GRADUATE LABOR ECONOMICS
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-1:20pm
PLC 410

CONTACT INFORMATION
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Course Website: On Blackboard

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is has several goals. The first is to develop a solid understanding of the literature in several important areas of study in labor economics. The second is to become comfortable with a variety of empirical approaches that are commonly used by labor economists. Both of these aim at the more important goal of preparing you to conduct original research.

READINGS
The required readings (denoted by a *) are listed below under each topic. However, the following are good references for those engaged in empirical research.


   Cameron, A. Colin and Pravin K. Trivedi (2005), Microeconometrics: Methods and Applications, New York: Cambridge University Press.


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
Distribution of Points:
15% Class Participation (and Quizzes)
25% Referee Report
25% Replication Project
35% Research Proposal
Class Participation (and Quizzes)

Your class participation grade will depend primarily on reading assigned articles before coming to class and bringing your insights to the class discussion. In addition, at the beginning of class I will usually ask you to provide a short response to a question aimed at verifying that you have done the reading. If you miss a class, see me to work out an alternative.

Referee Report

The second requirement for this course is to write a referee report. A referee report is an anonymous critique of a paper written at the request of a journal editor. It is intended to help the editor decide whether or not to pursue publication of the paper but it is also provided to the author.

As a referee, one also writes a letter to the editor to accompany the referee report. This letter is not shared with the author. It is in this letter in which a referee a referee makes a recommendation (reject, request a revision, accept subject to revisions, accept) along with other comments that might be better left out of the referee report. This letter is not required for this assignment.

A typical referee report is 2-4 pages (single-spaced). It should begin with 1-3 paragraphs summarizing the paper and putting it into context. The rest of the report should be a critical analysis (which may be a list of comments or in paragraph form). Comments typically address a paper’s weaknesses and, when possible, provide suggestions on how the author might improve the paper. Some common examples are: is the empirical analysis a convincing way of answering the author’s research question? Is the identification strategy valid? Are the results interpreted correctly? Has the author provided alternative explanations for the results? Is there anything the author could do to get at the underlying mechanisms behind the main results? How big of a concern is external validity? Are there any robustness checks the author could do to make the paper more convincing? Is there a relevant literature that the author should be discussing but does not? Is the paper well organized and clear?

Early in the course, I will distribute a list of papers for you to choose from. I will also provide a handful of sample referee reports to give you a better sense of what one should look like. Please work on your report independently.

Replication Project

The third requirement for this course is to replicate the key results from Angrist and Evans (1998), “Children and Their Parents’ Labor Supply: Evidence from Exogenous Variation in Family Size.” You will only need to replicate the analysis that is based on data from the 5% 1990 Census Public Use Micro Sample, which can be obtained from http://usa.ipums.org/usa/. I encourage you to discuss this project with your classmates but you should each acquire the data and conduct the analysis on your own. In the “Important Dates” section below, I have listed dates by which you should have accomplished various aspects of the project. On those dates, I would like you to submit evidence of your progress in the form of analysis output (and do files in an appendix). Throughout the quarter, you will replicate Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10.

Research Proposal

The fourth requirement for the class is a research proposal, which aims at getting you started on an original research project. A good research proposal needs the following: a clear research question, a data set that could be used to answer the research question, a well-defined empirical strategy, and a
strong sense of how the project will contribute to the literature. The proposal should read very much like a paper without results or a conclusion.

If you already have a project in progress, we should talk about this component of the class as soon as possible. For those falling into this category, I will waive the requirement for a proposal in exchange for two things: (1) you must pitch at least two research ideas to me throughout the quarter and (2) you must demonstrate significant progress on your research.

Regardless of whether or not you are doing a proposal or continuing a work in progress, you will be required to do a presentation towards the end of the quarter.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

| Document Progress on Replication Project (Tables 1 and 2): | Tuesday, January 26 |
| Document Progress on Replication Project (Tables 3, 4, and 6): | Tuesday, February 11 |
| Referee Report Due: | Tuesday, February 23 |
| Research Proposal Due: | Thursday, March 4 |
| Research Proposal Presentations: | March 9 and March 11 |
| Replication Project Due (Complete): | Thursday, March 18 |

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Introduction, Why Good Research is Difficult, Idea Generation**


Angrist and Pischke (2008), Chapter 1.

**Causal Inference, Crash Course on Empirical Methods**


**Labor Supply**


**Minimum Wages**


**Immigration**


**Retirement**


**Education: Returns**


**Education: Signaling**


**Education: School Quality**


**Consequences of Job Displacement**


**Military Service**


**Discrimination**


**Intergenerational Mobility**


**Neighborhoods**


**Economics of the Family**


Health


Higher Education


Inequality
