



FLORIDA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## ECO 6938: Quant Workshop

Professor Christopher Clapp

Syllabus, Spring 2015

Email: [cclapp@fsu.edu](mailto:cclapp@fsu.edu)

Class Location: 280 Bellamy

Office Location: 281 Bellamy

Phone: (850) 645-0756

Class Meetings: W 12:30-1:30pm

Office Hours: By appointment

### Course Description

This workshop is conducted as a regular meeting of graduate students and faculty members with an interest in applied microeconomics research. During meetings, members of the Florida State University community and/or invited visitors will present their research and solicit feedback from participants in the workshop.

### What's My Incentive for Taking This Course?

At this point in your graduate careers, this should be an easy sell: RESEARCH IS FUN! What's more, the workshop exposes you to current research topics, theoretical models and empirical methodologies used in the discipline, and practical problems that occur when conducting applied research. Knowledge of all of these things is necessary to successfully complete your dissertation. The workshop also provides a collaborative, low-stakes environment for you to develop and refine your own research ideas and gives you a chance to practice your critical reasoning skills and ability to "think on your feet." (But, wait, there's more,) you'll also have the chance to interact with Department faculty in your presumed area of interest and (finally) participate in what are often lively, interesting discussions. In short, you get to be an economist.

(Now, how much would you expect to pay for all this...?)

### Expectations

1. All students are expected to attend and actively participate in all meetings of the workshop.
2. First-year students are required to attend the meetings and participate.
3. Second- through *N*th-year students without an active research agenda are required to present a **research idea** and preliminary work in developing their idea into a full research project.
4. Second- through *N*th-year students with an active research agenda are required to present their **research** in one of the meetings.

## Presentation of a Research Idea Guidelines

You are expected to (give a short presentation where you) develop an interesting research question, review the relevant literature, and provide a plan for continued research. To do so, you should

1. Identify a topic of interest.<sup>1</sup>
2. Perform an extensive literature review with the purpose of:
  - (a) Learning what has been already addressed in the literature,
  - (b) Figuring out what is still missing in the literature, and
  - (c) Narrowing down your interest to a specific research question.
3. Develop a plan to continue with the research project by:
  - (a) Determining what data you'll use,
  - (b) Developing a simple version of a theoretical model,
  - (c) Thinking about likely identification issues,
  - (d) Proposing an empirical strategy that addresses those identification issues, *and/or*
  - (e) Outlining questions/issues/difficulties that you still need to figure out.
4. Prepare a presentation where you explain your progress on 1-3. Be sure to:
  - (a) Describe a clear and concise research question, then motivate the relevance, importance, and interest of your question. Make sure to be excited about your idea! If you aren't, your audience certainly won't be.
  - (b) Summarize the current state of the literature. See the next section for advice on how to effectively do so. (Hint: it is not by listing papers you've read and explaining what they did/found.)
  - (c) Present your "road-map" in as much detail as you can given the current state of the project. Don't feel like you have to address every point in 3 or that you have to limit yourself to those issues.

Presentations of research ideas will take place in a "poster session" in which two students per workshop will present their research ideas. You will be allowed 30 minutes to present your research ideas including questions from the audience which can interrupt at any time. This means that you should prepare a presentation of no more than 15 minutes without questions. You are not required to turn in a written report, but you are required to practice your presentation in advance (see the next section for more detail). Also, you should send me your presentation title and an abstract at least one week before you present.

While developing your first research project can be onerous and subjecting your ideas to the criticism of others is often daunting, you should be excited about the opportunity to get feedback from your colleagues. Doing so is the best (also easiest) way to improve your work, so be sure to think seriously about any comments/questions/concerns you get and follow up on them.

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<sup>1</sup>See the "Choosing a research topic" section of the [Tips 4 Economists](#) webpage for numerous suggestions on how to do so.

## Presentation of Research Guidelines

You are expected to present the current state of your research. You will be allowed the full 60 minutes of the workshop to present your work including questions from the audience which can interrupt at any time. You should email me

1. A title and abstract as soon as possible after you sign up for a date, and
2. The current draft of your paper one week before you present if you have one.

Doing so will help me publicize your talk and will result in more substantive comments from the audience, which is in your best interest. You are also required to practice your presentation in advance.

I'll give you a few suggestions that I see as being key ingredients in a good presentation, then I'll defer to those with more authority on the subject.

## My General Guidelines

- Treat your presentation like a mix of a sales pitch and reading a story.
  - That it's a sales pitch means you have to sell your work... and yourself. Be sure to be excited about your research!
  - Since you're telling us a story, make sure you transition cleanly from one idea to the next. Organize and link your ideas in a coherent manner.
- Your first slide should be something to get us interested in your presentation. This might be a surprising pattern in the data, a sense of the magnitude of an inefficiency, a puzzle in the Economics literature, etc.
- Your second (no later than third) slide should tell us, in broad strokes, what you're doing and why it's interesting/innovative/cool (remember, be excited). That's about all the time you'll have before people start asking questions. Get to the good stuff quick!
  - Anticipate that an applied micro audience will want to know what your empirical strategy is and how you intend to produce causal estimates. Be sure to preview this!
- Preview your results. The probability that you won't get to them at the end is not zero.
  - A corollary, keep an eye on your time and know what you can skip over if you're behind. Make sure you have a way to transition past the skipped material without making subsequent slides confusing.
- When presenting your literature review, outline relevant information that we know from the literature, then fill in with specific examples. DO NOT list papers and tell us what they said. Tell a story!
- When presenting complex equations, explain the big picture. What does each term represent and why is it in the model? Just about everyone in your audience will require longer to digest the equations than you'll spend on the slide, so explain the forest for the trees.
- Use intuitive stories and examples to explain complex concepts, but also know how those examples function in terms of the theory/empirics of your work.

- Your slides and bullet points should be succinct.
- Practice your presentation in advance! Next, revise your presentation based on your practice presentation. Finally, repeat this process several times for as many different audiences as you can muster (pets, significant others, and fellow graduate students are all great candidate audiences). Do so until you can give a crisp, precise, and lively presentation without looking at your slides. DO NOT READ YOUR SLIDES TO YOUR AUDIENCE!

## References

- As for the experts, [Cawley \[2014\]](#), Section 5c (Job Talk) provides a thorough overview of presenting in academia (although you'll probably want to read the whole article at some point to get a sense of what going on the job market entails).
- Pay particular attention to Shapiro's "[How to Give an Applied Micro Talk](#)" slides, especially how few words are on each slide!
- Also, take note of the general ideas in [Schwabish \[2014\]](#). Economists are generally pretty bad at data visualization. This means that there's probably room for improvement over the figures in the articles you are presenting. It also means that you have the potential to impress people on the job market with your figures. Just don't let your presentation come at the expense of content.
- Also, Chapter 3 of [Thomson \[2011\]](#) is titled "Giving Talks."
  - An earlier version of the book, [Thomson \[2001\]](#), is available in an electronic version through the FSU library.

## Evaluation

Your final grade in this course is measured on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory scale and will be determined based on how well you meet the course expectations outlined previously.

## Course Policies

- All cell phones, laptops, and other personal communication devices must be turned off and kept out of sight during the workshop. As a discipline, we are terrible at giving presenters our undivided attention, but just because you observe faculty members or conference attendees behaving poorly does not mean it is acceptable.
  - If you are expecting an emergency call prior to a workshop, please let me know.
- The class webpage is available through the Blackboard @ FSU portal. I will use it to post announcements and for anything else that it proves useful for. Please check it regularly.
- Email is the official means of communication for out-of-workshop communication. In other words, you are expected to check your FSU email account regularly.
- I have created a [Google Calendar](#) of the workshop schedule. Please check it for the most up-to-date information about the workshop.

## **University Attendance Policy**

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

## **Academic Honor Policy**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>.)

## **Americans With Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

1. register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
2. bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
[sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu)  
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

## **Free Tutoring from FSU**

On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options - see <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact [tutor@fsu.edu](mailto:tutor@fsu.edu). High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

## **Syllabus Change Policy**

“Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.”

## Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. I reserve the right to add invited speakers giving presentations outside the normal workshop time period to the schedule as their visits are announced.

Schedule for the Quant Workshop			
Week	Date	Day	Presenter – Topic
1	August 31	Wednesday	Organizational Meeting
2	September 7	Wednesday	Hugo Montesinos
3	September 14	Wednesday	Carl Kitchens
4	September 21	Wednesday	Steve Pawlowski (HPC)
5	September 28	Wednesday	OPEN
6	October 5	Wednesday	Ketsia Dimanche
7	October 12	Wednesday	Steve Pawlowski
8	October 19	Wednesday	OPEN
9	October 26	Wednesday	Fred Bedsworth
10	November 2	Wednesday	Robert Gmiener / Hanna Hoover
11	November 9	Wednesday	Kitchka Petrova / Mike Babington
12	November 16	Wednesday	Gaby Caceres / Jian Cao
	November 23	Thanksgiving	Break – No Workshop
13	November 30	Wednesday	Kevin Chiu
14	December 7	Wednesday	Steven Landgraf
	December 14	Finals Week	– No Workshop

## References

- John Cawley. A guide and advice for economists on the us junior academic job market (2014-2015 edition). Technical report, American Economic Association, 2014. URL <https://www.aeaweb.org/joe/>.
- Jonathan A. Schwabish. An economist’s guide to visualizing data. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 28 (1):209–34, 2014. doi: 10.1257/jep.28.1.209. URL <http://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/jep.28.1.209>.
- W. Thomson. *A Guide for the Young Economist*. MIT Press, 2001. ISBN 9780262700795. URL <https://login.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/login?url=http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=61093>.
- William Thomson. *A Guide for the Young Economist*, volume 1. The MIT Press, 2 edition, 2011. URL <http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:mtp:titles:0262016168>.