Ag Econ 8010 Research Methodology

Fall 2015
Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-10:45am
142 Mumford Hall
3 credit hours

Instructor:
Harvey James, 146 Mumford Hall, 573-884-9682, HJames@missouri.edu

Course Description:
In this course students will examine the nature of the research process, explore the connection between theory and empirical methods in applied economics research, identify viable research topics, critique published research, learn how to structure good arguments, understand the structure of research papers and proposals, and plan and manage research activities. Students will also write a thesis/dissertation proposal or research paper and receive Institutional Review Board training. Prerequisite: graduate standing.

Required Readings:
(1) Don Ethridge, Research Methodology in Applied Economics, Blackwell Publishing, 2004. (Click here to order from Amazon.com)
(2) Articles and other assigned readings.

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(1) Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, The Craft of Research, 3/e, University of Chicago Press, 2008. (Click here to order from Amazon.com)
(2) Paul Leedy and Jeane Ormrod, Practical Research: Planning and Design, 8/e, Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005. (Click here to order from Amazon.com)
(4) William Thompson, A Guide for the Young Economist, MIT Press, 2011. (Click here to order from Amazon.com)
(5) Deirdre McCloskey, Economical Writing, Waveland Press, 1999. (Click here to order from Amazon.com)

Course Requirements:
A principal objective of this class is for you to develop a draft of a publishable research paper and/or a research proposal, whether for a thesis, dissertation, or grant. Developing a draft of a publishable paper is required for PhD students.

You are expected to read the assigned material before class and to come to class prepared to ask and answer questions, particularly those that are pertinent to your research interests. As you prepare for class, think about how your participation can advance your research objectives. Course requirements include the following:

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<td>Attendance/participation</td>
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<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>Brief reports on 4 departmental seminars</td>
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<td>Research paper or proposal</td>
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**Academic Honesty:**

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, consult the course instructor.

With that said, if I find evidence that you have plagiarized, I reserve the right to give you a grade of zero on the assignment and to report the incident to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies (room 111 Jesse) and the department chair.

**Disabilities:**

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office. To request academic accommodations (for example, a notetaker), students must also register with the Office of Disability Services, [http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu](http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu), S5 Memorial Union, 882-4696. It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on “Disability Resources” on the MU homepage.

**Intellectual Pluralism:**

The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions concerning the quality of instruction in this class may address concerns to either the Departmental Chair or Divisional leader or Director of the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities [http://osrr.missouri.edu/](http://osrr.missouri.edu/). All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.

**Disclaimer:**

This syllabus and the discussion and reading schedule are subject to change to facilitate instructional and/or student needs.

**Discussion and Reading Schedule**

The following schedule indicates the topics and readings for our class meetings. Chapters from Ethridge are in the textbook required for the course. All articles are in the “Course Documents” section of Blackboard. Please read the assigned material before class. The schedule is preliminary and subject to change, so check back frequently for updates.

**Week 1 – August 24, 26**

**Topic:** Getting started (life as a graduate student, examples and types of research, thinking about research questions and problems)

**Readings:**
• Ethridge, ch. 1

**Weeks 2 & 3 – August 31, September 2, 7, 9**  
Topic: **Practical and philosophical foundations of research** (process of research and scholarship, identifying and reading relevant literature, constructing arguments, scientific method, deductive v. inductive research, logical fallacies)  
Readings:  
• Ethridge, ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, Appendix E  

**Weeks 4 & 5 – September 14, 16, 21, 23**  
Topic: **The research problem** (structure of papers and proposals, elevator statements, problem statements, objectives, literature review)  
Readings:  
• Ethridge, ch. 6, 7, Appendix A, B, C

**Week 6 – September 28, 30**  
Topic: **Thinking critically** (evaluating research, journal rankings)  
Readings:  
• Ethridge, Appendix D  
• Pannell, "Reviewing Journal Articles," 2006

**Weeks 7 & 8 – October 5, 7, 12, 14**  
Topic: **Economic theory and model building** (distinctiveness of economic methodology, modeling to answer your research question, conceptual framework, hypothesis formation, prediction v. explanation)  
Readings:  
• Ethridge, ch. 8  

Optional readings:

Weeks 9 & 10 – October 19, 21, 26, 28
Topic: Empirical issues (perfect data, primary and secondary data, data collection, experiments v. field data, choosing the right econometric techniques, classical sampling theory, Bayesian inference, fit v. significance, Type I and Type II errors, variable transformations)

Readings:
- Ethridge, ch. 9

Optional Readings:

Week 11– November 2, 5
Topic: Group regression activity

Weeks 12 & 13 – November 9, 11, 16, 18
Topic: Research ethics (professional ethics & scientific misconduct, plagiarism, conflicts of interest, IRB training)

Date TBD. IRB training is required for all researchers conducting research using human subjects. Many projects involving agricultural and applied economics fall into this category. This training will orient you to issues relating the student research and the eIRB system, including the process of obtaining IRB certification.

Readings:

Thanksgiving break – November 23, 25

Week 14 – November 30, December 2
Topic: Writing and submitting research papers (grammar, charts and tables, submitting papers to journals, revising and more revising)
Readings:
• Ethridge, ch. 10

Week 15 – December 7, 9
Topic: Wrap up and reports of individual research projects