

Preliminary Term Paper Guidelines and Structure of the Research Proposal ECNS 432

Paper: The paper should address a real-world policy-relevant issue (e.g., some aspect of regulation, a policy change, or a relationship of interest that clearly matters for policy). The topics from which you can choose to write on are very broad. Anything that is related to economics and policy is likely fair game. But, to be safe, you should plan on running your idea by me before you jump into your research proposal.

Despite the fact that the title of this class is “Benefit-Cost Analysis”, **I do not want your paper to be a benefit-cost analysis.** I want your paper to focus on a very specific hypothesis that you wish to test. For example, if one were to write a benefit-cost analysis on state marijuana legalization, you would need to consider all potential costs, all potential benefits, and weigh these against each other. **DO NOT DO THIS FOR YOUR TERM PAPER.** A viable paper topic would focus on, for instance, the relationship between state marijuana legalization and traffic fatalities. This is a *specific* testable hypothesis and will lend itself to a more in-depth data analysis and will make for a much more interesting term project.

I expect the analysis and writing to be of very high quality (and yes, things like grammar and spelling matter!). Although there is no formal page requirement, I expect that most students will write papers that are roughly 15 double-spaced pages in length (not including tables and figures). We will discuss the exact details of the paper structure later in the semester (e.g., introduction, literature review, potential data sources, proposed methodology, etc.). As noted in your syllabus, the important dates are the following:

Tues., February 2 nd	Research proposal due (1-2 pages). See below for research proposal template
Tues., April 13 th	First draft of term paper due to your peer reviewer.
Tues., April 20 th	Reviewer reports due
Tues., April 27 th	Final term papers due.

Research Proposal Template

I. Introduction. A clear, concise statement of the problem you are addressing. In a paragraph (or two), convince the reader why your question is interesting and important.

II. Brief literature review. Provide and briefly discuss relevant research to your proposed project (try to find peer-reviewed academic journal articles related to your topic). **In your research proposal, you are required to cite 3 relevant papers published in the top-100 journals listed in the “List of Economics Journals” that is provided on our class webpage.**¹ The number of papers you will need to cite from this list of journals will increase for the final paper.

III. Proposed methods. How do you plan on testing your hypothesis with data? All papers are required to have a data analysis. In this section, you will should describe what data you plan on collecting and what is your initial plan for data analysis (e.g., descriptive comparisons, regression analysis, etc.).

IV. Implications. Briefly explain what you expect the completed research will add to our understanding of some broader set of issues in economics.

¹ Exceptions to this list include the *American Law and Economics Review*, *International Review of Law and Economics*, *Journal of Legal Studies*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, and *Contemporary Economic Policy*. These journals are listed outside of the top-100, but are fair game.