SYLLABUS

This course consists of students making presentations of their dissertation work. The objective is to provide all students enrolled in the PhD program with feedback on (1) their original research ideas; (2) their presentation technique.

The course meets on Tuesdays at 3pm. A meeting will consist of either a single one hour presentation when there is one speaker, or two sequential one hour presentations when there are two speakers.

Regular attendance is required. Each student will be allowed a maximum of two missed meetings per term. This course is graded pass-fail.

All third year students are required to make a presentation in the Spring, all fourth year students are required to make presentations in the Fall and in the Spring, and all fifth year students are required to make a presentation in the Fall. Students should contact Gail Sullivan to schedule their presentations as soon as possible.

Papers presented are to be original work by the student, produced under the guidance of a thesis advisor. By noon on the Friday before presenting a paper, the student must submit to the instructors and their advisors:
1. A filled out 'presentation checklist,' which is attached.
2. A draft of the paper to be presented, or the slides for their talk if there is no paper

Students must also arrange for their advisors to attend their presentations, and to print enough copies of their papers for distribution to students and faculty.

It is strongly advised that students’ presentations follow the general format of the presentation checklist. It is also very important that you time yourself in a way to finish your presentation in the allotted time without rushing towards the end (try to prepare no more than 25 slides). Make sure that each slide is legible and does not contain too many sentences. Do not read your slides in your presentation – what you say should add to what is written.

Students who are not presenting are expected to read the papers or handouts ahead of time, be prepared to ask intelligent questions at the seminar, and to fill out a feedback form to be given to the presenter at the end of the presentation.

Note: Students should read the "Information for Doctoral Students" from the department's web page, which contains additional information on thesis-related requirements.
DISSERTATION WORKSHOP PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

Note: Please use language that can be understood by a senior undergraduate economics major. This is a very difficult form to fill out well, so take your time and think carefully. Try to imagine yourself in the place of the ignorant but interested reader. This form should also be used as a guideline for your overheads and your presentation.

1. State the precise hypothesis to be investigated, in 25 words or fewer.

2. Explain why investigation of this topic is worthwhile.

3. List the main deficiencies of previous investigations of this topic (in your presentation, you should spend very little time on this, focusing instead on point 4).

4. Explain what you propose to remedy these deficiencies. What makes your approach different and better?

5. What is the single most important result you have found so far?
Tips for preparing your presentation:

- The dissertation workshop should not be the first time you present your paper to an audience. Practice and preparation are crucial to giving a successful workshop presentation.
  - Practice your presentation out loud at home to get a sense of how long it will take you to get through the key points.
  - Gather up your friends (that is what friends are for!) a week before your presentation and have them sit through one or two trial runs of your presentation and give you feedback.

- Time management
  - Presenters should always finish on time. You are not going to have the time to discuss every detail of your research during your presentation. There is going to be discussion and questions during your talk. You should probably plan for a presentation that would run 35-40 minutes without interruption for a 60 minute presentation. It is better to end a little early than to run late.
  - Audience members should always show up on time and stay through until the end of a presentation. It is disrespectful, unprofessional and distracting to have audience members wandering in and out of the seminar room while someone is trying to give a presentation.

- Get to the point!
  - Your main objective in the presentation is to tell the audience what the main contribution of the paper is as soon as possible.
  - Be very careful about introducing issues which are not central to the paper. This is a good way to derail your talk. A bullet point or comment on a tangential issue can distract the audience and lead to a long discussion of an issue that has very little to do with your paper.
  - There is a limit to how much theory and how many facts and results an audience can digest within the hour. It is thus best to focus as much as possible on a few main findings than to overwhelm the audience with details.
  - Don’t do detailed proofs or math derivations. Present your main results, and provide some intuition for why your math is right.

- Don’t read your slides. The audience can and will read your slides. What you say out loud should add to what is written on the slides. For example if you have list of references, instead of reading out each name and date, you can summarize and extend what is written on the slide by saying something like “These authors all looked at how A affects B, but I’m estimating how B determines A.”
• For most seminars, including the dissertation workshop, it is best to assume the audience knows a lot of general economics, but little of your particular area of specialty. They may not have read the seminal papers in your literature, so saying "this model is an extension of Smith (1986)" might be a meaningless statement to some of the audience. Be prepared to briefly and concisely explain the basics.

• Don't spend too much time discussing the prior literature. Be clear about the distinctions between past work and your paper. Instead of saying “Smith did A, Jones did B…” you can say, “I do C, which differs in the following ways from Smith and Jones…” The literature review should make it easy for the audience to quickly identify what has already been done and what you do that is new.

• Handling questions:
  o When someone asks a question, stop your talk and listen. Don't interrupt or start answering the question before the audience member is finished speaking.
  o Keep a sheet of paper handy. You may not have a quick answer to every question and some questions may point to changes you will need to make in your paper.
  o You should attempt to answer all questions, but (i) make your answers and brief and concise as possible and (ii) don't let your talk get sidetracked from the main issue.
  o If you don't know the answer to the question, it is better to say you don't know and that you will look into it than to try and bluff your way through the answer.

• When writing up slides:
  o Make sure the font is large enough to be readable.
  o Don't make slides with a bullet point for every word you intend to say.
  o Limit the amount of material that is on each slide. Every bullet should have a point and you should think hard about the point each slide is supposed to make.