**ECON 8600 Research and Writing in Economics**

Fordham University

Department of Economics

Spring 2023

**Class details:**

Class hours: Mondays 9:30 to 11:20 am in Dealy 208A.

**Instructor details:**

Lecturer: Dr. Sophie Mitra

Office hours: Tuesdays 10 to 11 am or by appointment online at [this link](https://fordham.zoom.us/j/6494899934?pwd=SDR3U1hPODhwZUdweHpXaGtTeTViUT09).

E-mail: mitra@fordham.edu

[Google scholar profile](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Z3wqo_4AAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao)

[SSRN Webpage](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/cf_dev/AbsByAuth.cfm?per_id=552378)

**Objectives of the Course**

This course will aim to teach Ph.D students skills that are necessary for the production of high quality research in economics. In particular, it will train students in (i) how to find, develop and explore research ideas; (ii) the ability to conduct an in-depth literature survey; (iii) the art of writing effectively, including the art of reporting statistical information; (iv) the skill of effective presentation. This course is aimed to facilitate students’ transition towards the development of their dissertation proposal.

Students will be required to prepare and present a research paper and poster on their topic of interest. The paper will have: a) a well-specified research question; b) a literature review that explains the innovation and contribution of the proposed research; c) a proposed theoretical and/or empirical methodology. This is not to be done in isolation: through the presentations that each student makes, this course provides a forum for feedback and joint learning, while at the same time offering a place to build effective presentation skills.

**Prerequisite:**

This course is for economics Ph.D students in their second or third year.

**Grading:**

Evaluation is based on: a weekly writing/reading log until April 18th (15%); participation (in class, outside class, seminar series attendance) (10%); homework assignments (8) (25%); presentations (4) (20%), and a final research paper (30%)

“Read a lot and write a lot” is the prime rule for this course and for research. Students have a keep a **reading/writing log on a weekly basis**. They will share their progress with the instructor via this log every week.

**Participation**

This course is ***interactive***. Students are expected to ***participate*** in class as part of activities in pairs or larger groups, and individually. Students can also participate via interactions with the instructor during office hours or by email.

Students enrolled in this course are required to attend at least five Departmental research seminars[[1]](#footnote-1) during the semester and the Fordham distinguished lecture in economics. This will count towards the homework grade for this course. You will need to fill in and share a **seminar log.**

**Presentations:**

Students will make four formal presentations during this semester.

1. The first is a short presentation of 8 to 10 minutes about the topic that you will work on. It should cover your topic, what you know about this topic, why it matters (motivation), how you define the research question, who the “big names” are in the literature. In the minutes that you have, you might introduce key ideas in the literature that form the foundation for your work.

2. The 2nd presentation is on one of the economists you appreciate. If you are not sure where you start, you could look into those interviewed in Simon Bowmaker’s book, *The Art and Practice of Economics Research*. Thesuggested length of these presentations is 5 minutes; the presentation should cover theaccomplishments of the selected person and the “three” most important lessons that he/she offers in the interview. Students select their favorite chapter on the second day of class.

3. The third talk is a presentation of 10 minutes of the in-depth literature review for your topic.

4. The fourth talk is a presentation of your entire research paper for 35 minutes. (**i**) If your paper is complete, show what you have done and what you learned from this research. If your paper is not yet finished, show what you have accomplished so far, what you learned from this research so far, and what your aim is for the final product. (**ii**) Assume that the audience consists of PhD economists who are generally unfamiliar with your topic. Thus, define the research question carefully, and outline your contribution. (**iii**) The presentation may draw from other published articles, e.g., as a brief literature survey underlying the topic of choice, or as a way to show how other researchers have addressed related issues.

**Research paper:**

Students will work on a research paper on their topic of interest.

The paper must be a new project, not a continuation of a project (i.e., term paper, a literature survey or a research project) from a previous semester, although it may be related to previous work. Therefore, at the start of the semester, the first task is to define the project. This is done in coordination with the instructor and the faculty member in the field under which the project is headed.

The many directions that a research paper can take make it difficult to precisely indicate what the progress reports should reflect. For a typical paper, the **progress report** due by week 8 as part of homework assignments must include a review of the main literature, a brief discussion of the theory behind the empirical work, and an outline of the rest of the paper.

There is no set length for the paper (or, for that matter, for the progress report). It is expected that the paper is about 15 pages long, but the more important consideration is whether the paper has sufficient substance.

The submitted final draft must be a polished product. Typos as well as substantial and systematic errors in grammar and style that violate principles of writing that were discussed in class reflect poorly on the quality of the paper, regardless of how revisions of the final draft will still improve it. **The final draft will be evaluated by (i) the instructor for this course, and (ii) a second reader, namely the faculty member in the field under which the project is headed who was consulted at the beginning of the semester.** The evaluation process is the following. The final draft will first be evaluated by the instructor. If there are no major issues to be addressed immediately, the draft will be forwarded to the second reader. But if the instructor does find major issues in the final draft, this draft will be returned to the student, who must revise the paper and submit a revised final draft to the instructor, who will then evaluate whether this draft is ready for forwarding to the second reader.

**Inclusive Learning**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Rose Hill - O’Hare Hall, Lower Level, x0655 or at Lincoln Center – Room 207, x6282).

Whether or not you have documented accommodations, your success in this class is important. If there are aspects of the course that prevent you from participation or learning, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we can develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Also keep in mind that many campus resources you may find useful, such as the Writing Center (Walsh Library Reference Area Room 121, 718-817-0077 and Counseling and Psychological Services O’Hare Hall Basement, 718-817-3735), are available to all students.

**Assistance**

I believe in the Jesuit approach to education, and I hope that my respect for you and your potential will be reflected in your experience both inside and outside of the classroom.

Most students find this course to be challenging. I care about your personal and academic well-being, and I want you to succeed. While acknowledging that my help alone can only supplement time spent taking lecture notes, participating in class meetings, reading, and studying, I invite you to seek help when you want it. I am reachable via email at mitra@fordham.edu

**Electronic Devices:**

Please switch off your cell phones or any other recording devices before class starts.

**Academic Integrity**

Fordham takes academic integrity very seriously. Violations fall under three main categories: submitting work that is not your own, submitting work that you have previously handed in for another class (without instructor approval), and failing to appropriately document your sources. Sanctions range from receiving an F on the assignment to being expelled from the university.

All students are expected to be familiar with the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy and adhere to it. Plagiarism, cheating, falsification, unapproved collaboration, and other violations will not be tolerated. Exam answers are expected to be entirely your own work. If you suspect that academic dishonestly has occurred, please notify me promptly and privately.

**Health and Safety**

We all experience emotional distress and personal difficulties as a normal part of life. As your instructor, I am not qualified to serve as your counselor. However, Fordham’s office for Counseling and Psychological Services provides free and confidential mental health services that are not connected to your academic record. To make an appointment, call (718) 817–3725 (RH) or (212) 636–6225 (LC). Please be aware that as an instructor, I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety and/or the Title IX Coordinator if I learn that you have been subject to any conduct prohibited by the University’s Sexual Misconduct Policy. Once a report is made, the University will seek to properly support any affected student and make efforts to stop the prohibited behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. There are two places on campus not subject to this reporting requirement where you can seek confidential support: Counseling and Psychological Services and Campus Ministry. The Student CARE Brochure can provide you with on and off-campus resources for support and more information.

**Intellectual Property**

Course materials like video lectures are my intellectual property and should not be disseminated beyond the class. Lecture notes are your intellectual property and may be disseminated as you see fit.

**Privacy**

Student work and evaluation will be kept confidential, except as required by law or university policy, in the event of a grade dispute, or as permitted by express permission of the student. Digital copies of all examinations will be retained for one calendar year and then deleted. Please note that the Fordham Student Handbook states “recording and/or taking photographs of members of the University community and/or any persons on Fordham University property without their knowledge and consent is not permitted. **Audio recording of private meetings for purposes of record-keeping or later reference is permitted only if all participants are fully-informed that recording is planned and consent is given by each participant.” In general, I will not record class meetings. Students are not permitted to record class meetings, unless the Office of Disability Services has an approved accommodation that requires recording.**

**Course Outlines:**

1. Introduction (week 1- Jan 23rd)
2. Conducting a literature search and review (week 2 – Jan 30th)
3. Your **1st presentation** (10 min on your research topic) (week 3 – Feb 6th)

<https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/videos/2017/poster/costas_cavounidis>

1. Writing a paper (week 4 – Feb 13th)
2. Writing a paper continued (week 5 – Feb 21st)

***Monday Feb 20th is President’s day: No class***

***Tuesday Feb 21st follows a Monday schedule: we have class***

1. Talks, Posters, policy briefs, opeds (week 6 – Feb 27th)
2. Writing to get research grants & your **2nd presentation** (5 min on favorite scholar) (week 7 – March 6th)

***Monday March 13th is Spring recess: No class***

1. Your **3rd presentation** (10 min on your literature review) (week 8 – March 20th)
2. Writing referee reports and how to publish (week 9 – March 27th )
3. Economics and other disciplines (week 10 – April 3rd)

***Monday April 10th is Easter recess: No class***

1. How does the economics profession work? Guest lecture by Prof. Daniel Hamermesh April 17th

(economics conference room)

1. Inclusion and the social in research (week 11 – April 24th)

***Poster session on Wednesday May 3th (tentative)Time TBD***

May 1st. Class is cancelled. Instead please attend one keynote and one session at the [International Social and Environmental Justice conference](https://www.fordham.edu/academics/research/office-of-research/events/international-conference-on-social-and-environmental-justice/) at Fordham Lincoln center.

1. Your **4th presentation** (35 minutes) on May 8th and 15th

**Required Core Readings:**

Course materials will be kept in [this Google drive](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VGgzioaFtwLIUgJyQEZ8E1NQB8zjGAiM?usp=sharing).

You are required to have:

**Deirdre McCloskey, *Economical Writing*, 3nd ed. (University of Chicago Press 2019).**

**Zinsser, W. *On Writing Well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction*. 30th anniversary edition.**

You will also be required to read papers and selected chapters from various books, including:

Simon Bowmaker, *The Art and Practice of Economics Research*. (Northampton, Mass: Edward Elgar Publ., 2012). ISBN 978-1-84980-846-0 (EBOOK available through Fordham library).

Daniel S. Hamermesh (1992) The Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*—Volume 6, Number 1—Winter 1992—Pages 169–179.

Jane E. Miller, *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers*. (University of Chicago Press, 2004). ISBN 0-226-52631-3

Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. Scribner.

Tara Gray. *Publish and Flourish: Become of Prolific Scholar*. 2nd edition. Teaching Academy.

**Other Readings:**

John Creedy, Research without Tears: From the First Ideas to Published Output. (Northampton, Mass: Edward Elgar Publ., 2008). ISBN 978-1-84720-834-7.

*Composition*

Ann Raimes, Keys for Writers, 5th ed. (Wadsworth (formerly Houghton Mifflin, 2008)). ISBN 0618753869.

Andrea Lunsford, The St. Martin’s Handbook, 7th ed. (Bedford/St. Martin’s, New York, 2011); 6th ed. (2007), 5th ed. (2003). ISBN 0-312-39828-X.

Margaret Shertzer, The Elements of Grammar (MacMillan, New York, 1986). ISBN 0-02-861449-6.

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style, 4th ed. (MacMillan, New York, 1979).

*Scientific writing*

Jose L. Galvan, Writing Literature Reviews, 3rd ed. (Pyrczak Publ., Glendale, CA, 2004). ISBN 1-884585-66-3.

Michael Alley, The Craft of Scientific Writing, 3rd ed. Corr. 3rd printing (Springer Verlag, 1998). ISBN 978-0-387-94766-2.

*Getting things published*

Preston McAfee. “Edifying Editing.” The American Economist, Spring 2010, 55:1, 1-8.

Joshua S. Gans and George B. Shepherd, “How are the mighty fallen: Rejected classic articles by leading economists.” Journal of Economic Perspectives, Winter 1994, 8:1, 165-179.

Nils Goldsmith and Benedikt Szmrecsanyi. “What Do Economists Talk About? A Linguistic Analysis of Published Writing in Economics Journals.” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 66:2 (April 2007), 335-378.

1. The Economics Department Research Seminar is a weekly presentation of research by invited scholars from outside colleges, universities and other research institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)