

## ECO 310

### CHOOSING A PAPER TOPIC AND WRITING THE PAPER

- If you write the paper it will be worth 15% of your grade. If not, the final will be worth 40%.
- To write a paper you first have to write a proposal. This proposal has to be 3 pages long or less, and it is due March 15
- The paper can be in any topic in economics, broadly defined. The only restriction is that it makes some use of some of the many issues we cover in this class.
- A large part of the sessions we have left for this class will cover basic statistics, basic econometric techniques, and basic econometric models. I would expect most of the papers to make use of these techniques and less of the ones we have already covered.
- First, I suggest you start by thinking of a topic in economics or finance that captures your attention. Nothing helps a paper more than the author's motivation and interest in what he or she is writing about. Then discuss it with me during office hours, before class or after class.
- Second, you have to read what has been done in economics or related fields on this issue. It will probably be a mixed of non-technical and technical papers, articles, and books. For the proposal this will probably include only a few references, for the real paper more will be expected. I recommend you search in [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com) and [www.nber.org](http://www.nber.org) as a starting point. Obviously the library is a good place to visit.
- Third, you will have to find and make use of real data on the topic. It could be data you collect from public statistics on the internet, books, data CDs, etc.
- One of the main things I expect in a paper is a good structure. A good paper will have a clear introduction, probably one or one and a half pages long, that presents the main ideas of the paper. Second, a section summarizing the previous work in the area if any. Third, a section talking about the data and methods used if any. Fourth, a section with the main results, and finally a section with some concluding remarks and future ideas to explore.

Can you give us some examples? Sure. But you will have to help a bit.

Let's start with something apparently unrelated: Baseball.

- Someone could try to understand what determines the number of wins baseball teams reached in a given year.
- Can you think of ways to explain this?
- What data would you need? How would you get it?
- Is this actually something people write about? Yes, and why stop with Baseball...

Let's change the topic completely: migration

- Someone could try to understand why people migrate from one state to another, one country to another, or one continent to another.
- Can you think of ways to think of this topic?
- Is there data available on this? How can I get it?
- Where do I find papers, articles, or books on this?

What about education?

- You could try to explain why some people go to college and some people do not, for example.
- What do you think determines education choices?
- Data? Is it free?
- References

What about work during high school or work during college

- Understanding who works while in school can be quite important. Some people say it is good for grades, others that it is bad.
- Can you think of variables useful in understanding this problem?
- Isn't too difficult for our level?

What about when do people retire from the labor force

- This is a very important issue to understand. Social Security is the largest and most important Social program in the United States and most developed countries, and we need to understand retirement to understand how benefits will evolve.
- Any ideas?
- Data.

## Using the internet to search for jobs

- Growing number of people are using the internet to search for jobs. Is it an effective method compared with more traditional methods?
- How can we separate the internet effect from other things going on at the same time.
- Data?

## Do car recalls affect the number of accidents people get into?

- Cars are recalled in the thousands and the industry and the government are not sure how effective those recalls are in reducing the number of accidents.
- Data is available on the number of accidents by driver and car they were driving from the 1980s to the present.
- How do we go around answering this question?

## Investing in New Technologies: A Case study

- You could use a particular sector or industry and analyze their investment decisions regarding technology over time from the perspective and the techniques we have talked about in class.
- Sales of books, computers, software, e-bay, travel, etc...