

Assignments

Outline

- Paper Presentations
- Referee Reports
- Debate Essay #1 - *Due 2/19*
- Stata/R Problem Set #1 - *Due 2/21*
- Stata/R Problem Set #2 - *Due 3/6*
- Short Essay #1 (Mini Research Paper) - *Due 3/11*
- Short Essay #2 (Prospectus) - *Due 3/23*
- Debate Essay #2 - *Due 3/25*
- Stata/R Problem Set #3 - *Due 3/27*
- Stata/R Problem Set #3 - *Due 4/10*
- Final Research Paper (Draft) - *Due 4/20*
- Final Research Paper - *Due 5/4*

Paper Presentations

Instructions

In each class, one student will prepare a 20-minute presentation of the class's starred reading for the rest of the class. This presentation will focus on exposition, and should try to answer the following questions:

- What is the authors' core question?
- What is the authors' answer to their core question?
- If the paper was empirical, what data did the authors use? How did data access shape the authors' strategy? What was novel about the authors' empirical methodology?
- If the paper was theoretical, What theoretical model did the authors use? What assumptions were most important for their results?
- What did the authors find? What is their most important result?
- What should be the takeaway from this paper, for academics, for policymakers, or for practitioners?

Logistics

The paper presentation should be emailed to the instructors by 5:00 pm Eastern Time the evening before the class.

You will sign up for presentation slots during the first week of classes. The class will vote on whether student-slot matches will be determined by random serial dictatorship, random allocation, or top trading cycles.

Referee Reports

Instructions

In each class, two students will each prepare referee reports on the class's starred reading. These reports will focus on analysis and critique (avoid summary!), and should try to answer the following questions:

- Why should we care about this paper?
 - Is this paper primarily novel or interesting because of theory, methods, measurement, or topic of study?
 - How does this paper fit into the previous literature? (It may be helpful to look up one or two other papers in the literature)
- What could pose problems for the author(s)'s argument?
 - What are the weakest theoretical assumptions in the paper? What concerns do you have about these assumptions?
 - What are the weakest empirical assumptions in the paper? Why might these assumptions fail to hold? Does the author show any kind of empirical support for the assumption, and do you find that support convincing?
- How could the authors improve this paper?
 - What alternative/additional data sources could the authors have used?
 - What theoretical changes or model extensions could the authors have used?
 - What alternative empirical strategies or robustness checks could the authors have used?

During discussion of a paper, students who wrote referee reports will have a few minutes to summarize their comments on the paper.

Logistics

The referee reports should be emailed to the instructors by 5:00 pm EST the evening before the class.

You will sign up for referee report slots during the first week of classes. The class will vote on whether student-slot matches will be determined by random serial dictatorship, random allocation, or top trading cycles.

Debate Essays

Essay 1 (Antitrust) Due: 2/19, 9:00 am EST

Essay 2 (Organs) Due: 3/25, 9:00 am EST

Purpose

These short essays will teach you to incorporate economic concepts and research into applied, policy-relevant arguments. You will then use these essays to support you in in-class debates.

Instructions

There will be two debate essays, on the following questions:

- Should antitrust authorities prosecute firms based on size and concentration (A), or based on estimated effects on consumer welfare (B)? [2/19]
- Should the government allow the purchase and sale of kidneys? Yes (A) or No (B)? [3/25]

For each essay, choose a side (A or B) and provide an argument for it using the economics models we have seen in class. Your argument should incorporate an economic model, but you can also include arguments drawn from a variety of other sources (ethics, political science, sociology, etc.). You can write your own model or use one off the shelf (from a paper or textbook). Make sure to cite your sources. You should also anticipate potential weaknesses of your side and provide counterarguments.

Your paper should be structured as follows:

- Provide background on the market/industry/context
- Present your normative criteria: what is your policy goal? Why?
- Strengths/arguments for your side
- Weaknesses/critiques of the other side
- Anticipated counterarguments
- References

You should consult any resources which would support your argument, including economics papers in the relevant literatures, applied or policy papers, or texts from other fields. A good place to start is the references section of the required reading for the relevant week.

Logistics

Your essay should be:

- 3 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins

Short Essay #1: Mini Research Paper

Due: 3/11, 5:00 pm EST

Purpose

This short essay will introduce you to (1) building a model to answer a specific research question, and (2) writing an economics research paper. Skills developed in this shorter paper will prepare you to write your final research paper.

Instructions

You will write a (mini) research paper applying the themes we have learned so far about market power, monopoly, and oligopoly to a novel market. Your paper will have the following elements:

- A Research Question
- Background on the market:
 - How big is this market? Why is it interesting to economists?
 - How concentrated is the market?
 - What institutional details and market features guide your modeling choices?
- A model of competition in the market
- A mathematical result (comparative static, elasticity, etc.) which answers the research question
- Discussion of what data would identify the primitives of the model
- References

For this assignment, data collection and analysis will not be necessary.

Logistics

Your essay should be:

- 4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins

Research Paper

Prospectus Due: 3/23, 5:00 pm EST

Rough Draft Due: 4/20, 5:00 pm EST

Final Draft Due: 5/4, 5:00 pm EST

Purpose

This research paper will teach you to:

1. Gather data to answer a research question
2. Use data & empirical patterns to motivate model building
3. Write like an Economist!

Instructions

Your final research paper will be a complete theoretical and empirical analysis of a research question. This paper will happen in several steps.

First, you will turn in a **prospectus** which details your research question and summarizes your planned approach: what models you might use for your question, what data you might need, and what empirical strategy you might take. This prospectus is not a commitment, and you may switch questions if your original one is not fruitful.

Second, you will turn in a **rough draft** which should have the following elements:

- **Introduction:** What is this paper about?
- **Literature Review:** How does this paper build on what has been written before?
- **Industry Background:** What is unique about the setting of this paper?
- **Data:** What are the sources and types of data used by this paper?
- **Model:** What is the theoretical model studied by this paper?
- **Identification:** How do the observed data identify the model?
- **Estimation:** How do you use the data to recover the model parameters?
- **Results:** What are the results of the estimation?
- **Discussion:** How should we interpret the results of the paper?
- **Conclusion:** What did we learn from your paper, and where does it lead the literature next?
- **References**

These elements do not need to be in separate sections, and sometimes for ease of communication it may be better to combine two into one. You should also make sure to include a bibliography with all sources used and cited.

Third, you will receive comments from one of the instructors, after which you will revise your paper and turn in a **final draft**.

Logistics

Your paper will be:

- Prospectus: <2 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins
- Draft: ~10 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins
- Final: 15-20 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins