

AEM 7150-7151
Second Year Project of Dyson PhD Students

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All second-year PhD students in Dyson must complete an applied project and are required to sign up for the sequence AEM 7150-7151. The goal of the sequence is to help you make the critical transition from a consumer to a producer of research. The transition can be challenging with unexpected twists and turns, and a guided research project through this sequence aims to make the transition easier by familiarizing you with good practices and common pitfalls. Such a course design is common in PhD programs in applied economics or economics. In addition to being guided by the instructor of the sequence, students must select a mentor and work with this mentor to finish the project. This project can lead to a joint paper with your mentor (and/or others) or a single-authored paper. While we will not meet on a weekly basis, there will be several long meetings (see below) throughout the sequence. You are also expected to attend the Dyson seminar series and are strongly encouraged to regularly participate in relevant seminar series of your research areas in Johnson, Economics, and PAM. In addition, please feel free to schedule an appointment with me through email. In addition to making a smoother transition to become an independent researcher, another outcome of this project is one academic paper of good quality that could eventually appear in a top field journal (e.g., AJAE, JAERE, or JDE) later in your program.

You need to meet the following deadlines (the exact presentation time and location will be announcement later). All assignments should be submitted online in Canvas course site under the assignment link with the file name as: assignment number-FirstLastName (e.g., 3-ShanjunLi). Course grade will be based on assignments 1-7.

1. **Sept 9, 2021 (5 pts)** - Two pages bullet points of tips you learn from the references at the end of the syllabus on coding (Gentzkow and Shapiro), research and writing.
2. **October 7, 2021 (5 pts)** –From recent issues in American Economic Review, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Political Economy, or Review of Economic Studies find two articles to read very carefully. For each article, write a 2-page summary: what the paper does (question, method, and conclusion); how the introduction, the conclusion, and the paper overall was constructed/written/packaged; three key things that you have learned from the paper; why you think it was published in these top journals.
3. **November 25, 2021 (5 pts)** – Notify Professor Shanjun Li of your selected mentor on canvas
4. **Dec. 9, 2021 (10 pts)** – Two-page proposal due outlining the research question, motivation, contribution, the proposed method, and expected outcomes.
5. **Friday, Feb 10, 2021 (20 pts)** – First presentation. 10-minute presentation of your work to date and plans for next steps. All PhD students and faculty will be encouraged to attend.
6. **Friday, May 19, 2021 (25 pts)** – First draft of the project is due. It should include the essential component of the final draft (see below for the length requirement). You may not have all the results yet but you need to include your detailed plans for next steps.

7. **Thursday, May 25, 2021 (30 pts)** – Second presentation. Students will make 20-minute presentations of their work. 15-minutes will be allotted for presentation of the work, with 5 minutes for questions and comments. All PhD students and faculty will be encouraged to attend.
8. **August 25, 2021**– Final draft is due. The final draft should follow the standard academic economics journal publication format. You may get additional comments but this assignment will not be graded.

In addition to individual meetings you can set up with me and the two presentations, we will also hold group meetings (about 2-3 hours each) to check your progress and give your feedbacks and will include:

- (1) the kick-off meeting in late August to get your start thinking the second-year paper and discuss expectation and guidelines;
- (2) the meeting in late Sept. for an initial discussion of your research ideas;
- (3) the pre-proposal meeting in early December where we discuss your research progress;
- (4) the post-presentation meeting in early February to give you feedbacks and discuss next steps;
- (5) the pre-draft meeting in mid-May to discuss your draft.

For the first draft and the final draft, they SHOULD NOT exceed 50 pages (12 point font, double spaced) including everything except the appendix. You can include additional important materials in an appendix up to 20 pages (double spaced).

Students will be graded each semester based partly on whether they have met the deadlines and partly on their performance in written work (as evaluated by the referees). Students are encouraged to begin work as early as possible. This is a substantial and time consuming requirement. Moreover, this project should form the pattern for future work on your dissertation (and in many cases, may be included in the dissertation).

Three questions you need to ask yourself before deciding on the topic:

1. Why is it interesting/important (why should we care)? You can approach this by thinking about these questions: how does it inform the broad economic literature? What is the real-world examples (or the magnitude of the issue)? What are the policy implications?
2. What is my contribution?
3. What are the (empirical) challenges and how should I address them?

Important references:

On how to avoid plagiarism: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>

On dealing with graduate school stress:

<http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/bewell/grad%20student%20stress.pdf>

<http://thegradstudentway.com/blog/?p=1727>

Gentzkow and Shapiro Article on how to organize codes for empirical analysis:

<https://web.stanford.edu/~gentzkow/research/CodeAndData.pdf>

Neale Mahoney's article on descriptive vs. model-based (or reduced-form vs. structural) approaches to applied research

<https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.36.3.211>

Donald Davis's article on thesis research:

<http://www.columbia.edu/~drd28/Thesis%20Research.pdf>

Steven Pischke's advice on economic research:

<http://econ.lse.ac.uk/staff/spischke/phds/How%20to%20start.pdf>

John Cochrane's Writings Tips for PhD Students:

http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/research/papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf

Plamen Nikolov's article on writing tips that combine multiple sources including Cochrane's:

<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~pnikolov/resources/writingtips.pdf>

More resources can be found here

<http://li.dyson.cornell.edu/phdRes.php>