

GUIDELINES FOR JOURNAL ARTICLE CRITIQUE

Like the thesis critique, this assignment has three purposes: to give you a better feel for what is involved a professionally written research paper; to learn some economic results relevant to your own planned research project; to improve your oral and written communication skills.

To repeat some information from a previous handout: This assignment differs from the thesis critique in that I expect you to choose an article related to your research project. This will often involve searching on line databases. Some good databases may be found through the course web site: click on "Links to some web sites," go down to "Economics Research." In the list of links in "Economics Research, a good starting point is the "Econlit" link. Other links also may be helpful.

Your written critique should be about three pages long (word processed, double spaced, one inch margins, 10 or 12 point font). Please include a complete citation to the paper you are critiquing: title, author, journal, publication date (or URL if you are critiquing a working paper that you download). Typically, half or more (1½-2 pages) of the text will summarize the article. In writing the summary, bear in mind that an empirical research paper usually has four parts:

1. Definition of the topic, review of work by others on the topic, description of the distinctive aspects of the research.
2. Specification the theoretical framework.
3. Estimation of parameters and testing of hypotheses, or presentation of simulation results.
4. Discussion of results.

It will usually be appropriate to summarize each of these four parts. To fit your summary in 1½-2 pages, you will have to be concise. Professional articles will often involve statistical techniques or mathematical manipulations that are difficult for students to follow. I do not expect you to double check every single technical detail; I do, however, expect you to understand the purpose and contribution of all major aspects of the article.

The 1½-2 pages of summary will be followed by a 1-1½ page critique. Was the argument in the article persuasive? Was the evidence supportive? What should the author have done differently? What might the author done in addition, if he or she had the time and energy? Has the study stood the test of time?

Your oral presentation should follow the lines of your written critique. Since 5 people will present per class period, you will have a little under 15 minutes. Bear in mind that any given thesis will often involve material unfamiliar to some of your classmates. So try to present at a leisurely pace, and use economic concepts familiar to everyone who has taken Economics 301/302/311/312.

If you email me your presentation as an attachment by 2:00pm of the day of presentation, I will load it onto the class computer. Having the presentation loaded on the computer will give you an extra minute or two of presentation time. I will not check these presentations for compatibility, so please make sure that your file can be displayed by standard Windows software.

Please be prepared for me to ask the following question at the end of your critique: do you think you could base your own Econ590 paper on this journal article?