

GUIDELINES FOR THESIS CRITIQUE

This assignment has three purposes. The first is to give you a better feel for what is involved a student-written research paper. The second is to learn some new economic concepts or tools, ideally ones that will be useful in completing your own research project. The final one is to improve your oral and written communication skills.

Your written critique should be about three pages long (word processed, double spaced, one inch margins, 10 or 12 point font). Typically, half or more (1½-2 pages) will summarize the thesis. 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.

The 1½-2 pages of summary will be followed by a 1-1½ page critique. Was the argument in the thesis 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?

Your oral presentation should follow the lines of your written critique. Since 5 people will present per class period, you will have less than 15 minutes, when we account for a couple of minutes that will be required to transition from one speaker to the next. 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.

If you do not email your presentation to me, you can either copy it to a USB stick or download it via the web. If you plan to download via the web, please email the file to yourself, or post on your web page, prior to the class.