

Research Project

For this self-directed writing project you are to prepare a brief written report summarizing a theoretical article published in an economics journal. A few examples from prior years are available from the course home page.

Due Dates:

October 22nd: Report by Email to the instructor the author and title of the article you have found in appropriate bibliographical style (include author's name, title of article, name of journal, date of publication) to the instructor.

November 7th: Draft for peer review by November 7th.

November 24th: Final draft.¹

You should find an article of interest in one of the economics journals in Olin Library. Select an article written by and for economists. You should select an article that is primarily theoretical, although there may also be statistical evidence. Your article should not be from a non-technical source, such as *Business Week*, *The Economist*, *The New York Review of Books*; it should not be from a non-economics journal such as *Science*; it should be written by a professional economist rather than an economic journalist. You should not expect to understand fully all the details of a technical article – you can write a fine critique without getting bogged down in nitty-gritty details.

Find your own article rather than relying on the syllabus for another course. Here are some useful sources that will help you locate an article of interest:

EconLIT: An electronic data base listing every article published in all the economics journals over the last 30 years. Go to <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/>, then select Indices and Databases. Click in the INFO EconLit button to find out how to use this wonderful program to find an article on your chosen topic.

JSTOR: Also on the Indexes and Databases library page, JSTOR contains the complete text of all articles published in more than 20 leading economic journals up until about 1996.

NBER: The National Bureau of Economic Research website, <http://papers.nber.org/> links to a terrific working paper page from which you can search for a working paper (articles being prepared for publication in an economics journal) on your topic that you can download onto a Wesleyan computer.

Note: Edward Rubachar and the other Reference Librarians in Olin will help you to master these data bases.

Your grade will depend on both the quality of what you write and the care and skill with which you prepare your report. You should organize your paper in accordance with the following rules, unless your instructor approves an alternative mode of presentation in advance. Aim for two pages; maximum of three.

1. Place your name and date at the top of your report.
2. Next list references in appropriate format: author's name, the title of the article, place and date of publication, pages, etc. You may use the format employed in the article on which you are reporting, the format used in the *American Economic Review*, or that of a specific style manual. Put titles of articles in quotes; underline or italicize the titles of books and journals.
3. Explain how you found the article.

¹ If November 24th is not feasible, I will be willing to consider a later date if you request it by November 17th.

- If you used the *EconLit* data base to find the article, how many hits did you get on your topic. How did you narrow down your search?
 - If you did not use *EconLit* to find your topic, demonstrate that you have a working knowledge of this wonderful technology by looking up the topic of your article. Report how many hits you found? Also, look up the author(s). How many other articles by the same author(s) are listed in the database?
4. State the basic theme of the article in a short paragraph: What is the author trying to establish? Is it relevant to a particular topic on our reading list?
 5. Write a few paragraphs summarizing the major points of the article.
 6. Critique the article. Is the analysis convincing? Was the analysis skillfully executed? Was the article carefully crafted and written with care and style? What were the primary strengths and weaknesses of the article?
 7. Peer Review: After you have completed your next-to-last draft ask a friend (not necessarily a student in Econ 201) to review your product. Ask your peer reviewer to carefully check for spelling, grammatical and stylistic slips. Request suggestions about how you can refine your presentation and improve the effectiveness of your analysis. You might also consider taking your paper to the writing clinic. If you want your instructor to arrange a "peer review," you must submit your draft by November 7th. Attach to your final product the preliminary draft with the comments, suggestions, corrections and signature of your peer reviewer.
 8. Polish your product: If you word-process on a computer, have the program take care of such details as page numbering, creation of footnotes, etc. Avoid embarrassment by using the computer to spell-check your manuscript.