

Autumn Quarter 2002

To: Econ 29800 Workshop Participants:

From: Victor Lima,
Grace Tsiang

Re: Assignment Due Monday, November 25=9th Week.

As we stated in the workshop, we are giving you intermediate deadlines to organize your efforts in writing a research paper in economics during this year. By November 25th, you should be able to write a careful and focused statement of the question you wish to answer and your plan on how you will address the question.

This preliminary document should include a survey of the closely related existing research literature (with a properly formatted list of references) as well as a description of the research plan, and what you expect to find. Remember: research can be full of surprises: it's all right to write down what you expect to find, so long as having stated those expectations, you don't throw away contradictory results! Sometimes the most interesting papers are about how you didn't find what you expected.

Empirical papers: Please add any preliminary data analysis that shows the scope of the data set and the range of variation along the dimensions in which you are interested. Remember: we do not want to see what might be called mindless cross-tabulations of available data. This needs to be linked to a statement of what economic questions can be addressed with the available data.

Theoretical papers: we need to see (along with a survey of the related literature) a clear statement of the model assumptions. What do you expect will be the model implications? What previous work you intend to test for robustness regarding shifting of underlying assumptions? What increase in generality can you achieve in expanding a model to apply to a broader class (looser initial assumptions?)