

# PhD Research Seminar 2

## ECON 771

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McGill University  
Winter 2020

### Course Objectives

This course aims to support you in the initial phase of your thesis research. Through presentations and discussion, you will receive feedback on your work and practice essential skills of a well-trained economist. While the first term (Econ 770) focussed on generating and discussing ideas, this term will focus on getting you ready to submit your Third Year Paper and on preparing you for presenting it to the Department at the end of the term.

### Administrative Issues

Usually 1 meeting per week, Tue 10:05am-12.55pm in Leacock 520. Most days, the meeting will be shorter than this.

#### **Contact:**

email: markus.poschke@mcgill.ca  
office hours: by appointment.

**Requirements:** Previous completion of all comprehensive and field examinations.

**Grading:** Pass/fail. Your grade will be based both on your own research and on your productive interaction in class. If you miss a presentation for medical reasons, it will be rescheduled, if and only if you provide me with a valid medical note within two days of the presentation.

Note: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

**Academic Integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/> for more information). Note: According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1, General University Information and Regulations at [www.mcgill.ca](http://www.mcgill.ca).

## Timing

This is tentative for now.

**Weeks 1-3** Job market.

**Week 4** Discussion of job market seminars.

**Week 5** Discuss winter progress, response to comments, and plans for the term.

**Week 6** Deadline for rough drafts.

**Weeks 7-8** Discussion of rough drafts.

**Reading week**

**Week 9** Job market panel?

**Weeks 10-13** Research presentations.

**probably Apr 14-15** Third Year Paper Presentations, hand in draft of your Third Year Paper.

## Required activities

- *Job market:* Attend all job market seminars (see the list of dates distributed by email last week). In the words of the GPD: “It is extremely important that you attend these seminars, since you will normally be in this position at the end of your PhD program. It is a great opportunity to see the kind of work freshly-minted PhD students do, how they present, the type of questions they get (from people in and outside of their field), how they handle them.” Let me know by email if you are not able to attend some of these.
- *Discussion of job market seminars.* Pick one job market seminar (let me know by Jan 15 which one.) Give a brief presentation (ca. 10 min, no slides needed) of the candidate’s work. Give an assessment of the work and the seminar. From some point on, this discussion should be interactive, as all students contribute their thoughts.
- *Discuss winter progress, response to comments, plans for the term.* Submit, the day before class, a brief written summary of these points. Include a written list of comments on your work that you have received since September 2019, and your responses to them. Give a short presentation on this in class (no slides, 10 min each).
- *Rough drafts:* Submit a rough draft by the middle of the term. This can be very rough (bullet points in some parts) but should give a good idea of what you’re doing. You will then be paired up to comment on each others’ drafts.
- *Free discussion:* We may have some time for free discussion. We can discuss aspects of your work, of the profession etc. If you’d like me to comment on some general topics related to the profession, let me know in advance, ideally by email before Jan 23. One session will consist in a discussion of the academic job market.

- *Research presentation:* 45 min presentation in class. This is a practice run for your presentation to the department. Send me your presentation at least 30 min before class.
- *Third Year Paper presentation:* Present your paper to the department, in the week of Apr 14. 45 min presentation plus 15 min discussion. All sorts of questions will be asked.
- *Third Year Paper:* Hand in a draft of your paper in the last week of the course.

Note on logistics: bring your own computer for all presentations.

## Complementary activities

Being a good economist requires many skills that you need to practice. You practiced some of them in coursework, and will exercise some in your research. Attending seminars and conferences and talking to other economists, in particular more ones, is also very important. I therefore expect you to

- attend all departmental seminars.
- attend relevant workshops and conferences in town. As an example, there will be relevant Cirq workshops in several fields in April/May.

## Presentation guidelines:

### General points:

- There will be two to three presentations per class.
- Prepare a pdf-file with a presentation. (If you use Powerpoint, still prepare a pdf-file, like this you avoid funny characters appearing on your slides. At some point you may want to learn to use Latex plus e.g. Beamer.) Do not overload your slides.
- Target group: You are presenting to a class of economists. You know their background.
- Be economical with your time. Do not try to say everything – say what’s important.

### Points to address:

- What is your research question?
- Put your question/interest into context (but avoid a lengthy literature review).
- Why should others care? (Explain this in a way that others, who are not experts in the same sub-field, can understand.)
- Explain your approach to the problem (methodology).
- If your work has a theoretical component:

- Explain the ingredients of the model.
- Point out important assumptions.
- Use equations only where they are helpful.
- If your work has a quantitative component:
  - Explain the methodology used and how it relates to previous work.
  - Explain the data you use/will use, if there is anything particular about it, how it compares to previous work.
- In both cases: To the extent that this is possible, explain the most important results.
  - In 30-45 minutes you will not have time to talk about all results, mention the most important one(s).
  - Explain intuitively how they come about. Use equations/graphs if useful. If there is a convenient graphical representation, use it.
  - What assumptions (theory/identification) drive the result? Do you think that they are plausible? What would happen if we changed them?
- Evaluation:
  - What have we learned?
  - What are remaining weaknesses? What is your plan for continuation? Do you need to change anything major?