

Econ 231: Environmental Economics
Prof. Sarah West
Research Paper Guidelines

I. General Guidelines

All written submissions should be double-spaced and of 12 point Times New Roman font, have one-inch margins, and include references. All sources must be properly cited. Please include page numbers. Please print papers double-sided, preferably on recycled paper, or single sided on used paper. The page maximum is not negotiable; the limit INCLUDING references, tables, graphs and figures, is 15 pages. Papers that do not conform to these specifications will receive zero points.

For the final paper, each spelling error after the fifth error will result in one drop of a grade (from B to B-, for example). A simple way to find typos and errors is to read your paper aloud. Due to problems with software compatibility and server reliability, I do not accept electronic versions.

To find a topic on which to focus, you might brainstorm by browsing the topics discussed in [Resources for the Future's Weekly Policy Commentaries](#) (the rest of the www.rff.org website may also be helpful). To find articles related to your topic, you might search [JSTOR](#), [EconLit](#), the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#), the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), the [World Bank Environment Page](#), or [Resources for the Future](#). [Google Scholar](#) is particularly useful once you have located a central paper or two. Search early and ask me for suggestions.

II. Paper Stages

A. Project Proposal (1-2 pages):

- (1) Use descriptive statistics to motivate your study and to make the case for the relevance and importance of your research.
- (2) Explain the policy that you would like to analyze, state the question that you would like to answer, or the exposit hypothesis that you would like to test.
- (3) Detail (in paragraph form) your research strategy.
- (4) Include a bibliography. This bibliography should consist primarily of research papers published in peer-reviewed economics journals.

B. Revised Project Proposal (1-2 pages)

Revise your proposal based on Professor West's comments and your assessment of the feasibility of your initial ideas.

C. Literature Review (5-6 pages):

- (1) Before writing your literature review, carefully classify the papers you review into sensible categories (e.g. theoretical vs. empirical papers; papers on market-based incentives vs. papers on regulations; or papers that estimate benefits vs. papers that estimate costs).
- (2) Within category, summarize the papers that relate directly to your research, and explain exactly how each paper relates to your hypothesis or question.
- (3) Identify the gaps in the literature that your research fills, or how your research challenges previous results.

D. Final Paper Draft (12-15 pages including references, all graphs, tables, and figures)

Your final paper should include the following sections. While the Introduction and References need not be titled or numbered, all other sections should have their own headings and be numbered with roman numerals. The headings should be specific to your topic.

Introduction (1-2 pages)

- (1) Your first paragraph should motivate your topic and draw in the reader. It should end with a brief statement of your question or hypothesis. You will probably be able to base this paragraph on your paper proposal.
- (2) Your second paragraph should provide further clarification of your question if necessary.
- (3) Your third paragraph should briefly explain the method that you use to answer your question and the results of your analysis. Be very brief here.
- (4) The last paragraph of the introduction should tell the reader what each of the subsequent sections of the paper contains (i.e provide a “road map” for the rest of the paper).

II. Theory (3-5 pages):

- (1) Explain your hypothesis or problem in terms of an optimization problem. For example, if your paper considers the effect of policy on behavior, what is the goal of the policymaker, the firm, and/or the consumer? If you are testing a hypothesis using data, explain the underlying economic behavior that serves as the basis for your hypothesis.
- (2) Use graphical analysis to explain the current equilibrium and/or optimal equilibrium, or to explain the relationship between the underlying economic behavior and empirical data.

III. Empirical Evidence (3-5 pages):

- (1) Describe the data that you use to test your hypothesis or answer your question.
- (2) Calculate summary statistics using available data. Supplement summary statistics with empirical evidence from secondary sources.

OR

- (1) Summarize the conclusions reached in other empirical studies of your question.
- (2) Propose a new empirical approach that (a) describes the existing data you would use or the new data you would gather, (b) explains the empirical method you would employ, and (c) assesses the strengths and weaknesses of your proposed approach relative to those previously employed.

IV. Conclusion (1-2 pages)

- (1) Briefly summarize the results of your analysis.
- (2) Explain how your research contributes to the literature on your topic.
- (3) List any caveats to your preliminary conclusions.
- (4) Describe directions for future research.

References (these may be single spaced)

E. Final Paper (12-15 pages including references, all graphs, tables and figures):

- (1) Incorporate comments and suggestions from your classmates and Prof. West.
- (2) Rewrite paper, concentrating on clarity, presentation of evidence, and overall structure.
- (3) Check that all sources are properly referenced in the paper and in the references.
- (4) Find and fix all typos, spelling errors, and grammatical errors. Trade papers with a classmate and edit.
- (5) Read paper out loud to catch remaining errors.
- (6) Hand in paper and do a celebration dance.