we need to talk MORE …

Review of Macro Job Market Papers

Women	Date Received	Date Due	Date Sent	Topic
1	8/28/2019	9/11/2019	9/15/2019	payment systems
2	10/1/2019	10/15/2019	10/25/2019	securitization and house prices
3	9/16/2019	9/30/2019	10/5/2019	banking networks
4	9/5/2019	9/19/2019	9/27/2019	marriage and income risk
5	9/2/2019	9/16/2019	9/18/2019	house prices and consumption
6	9/13/2019	9/27/2019	10/1/2019	information technologies and wealth
7	9/18/2019	10/2/2019	10/5/2019	water quality and marriage markets
8	9/18/2019	10/2/2019	10/6/2019	health care expenses and liquity constraints
9	9/18/2019	10/2/2019	10/6/2019	multinationals and development
10	9/20/2019	10/4/2019	10/13/2019	yield cure and macroeconomic risks
Men				
1	8/22/2019	9/5/2019	9/1/2019	wage rigidity
2	9/13/2019	9/27/2019	9/28/2019	entreprenership and wealth
3	9/3/2019	9/17/2019	9/20/2019	minimum wage and occupational mobility
4	9/9/2019	9/23/2019	9/27/2019	redistribution and marginal propensity to consumer
5	9/4/2019	9/18/2019	9/27/2019	redistribution and the business cycle
6	9/18/2019	10/2/2019	10/9/2019	trends in firm growth
7	8/26/2019	9/9/2019	9/21/2019	industry effects of uncoventional monetary policy
8	9/30/2019	10/14/2019	10/15/2019	policy implementation and information
9	9/30/2019	10/14/2019	10/20/2019	firm size and employment in Great Recession
10	10/5/2019	10/19/2019	10/31/2019	rational inattention, multi-product firms, amd monetary transmission

This post is for job market candidates. You need to spend more time editing your abstract and introduction. It will be worth more than your fourth robustness check. Promise.

I have commented on TEN macro job market papers this month. Seven to go (three more spots open). *Amazing* research on *important* macro topics. As job market candidates, YOU are the most tech-up, cutting-edge economists. YEAH future is bright.

Sadly, it is clear that economics departments and dissertation committees are NOT teaching their doctoral students how to communicate their research. I had an excellent advisor who taught me the

structure of economics research papers. He expected good writing and I wanted to write well. Writing takes time, effort, and resources. The Board hires a professional writing coach to run a week-long course for all economists. We also have an in-house editing team. Good economics does not speak for itself. You must.

EVERY job market paper I read lacked a well-structured, well-written introduction and abstract. Many of these papers are from top schools and from native English speakers.

Here I extend and tailor my earlier post on communication for job market candidates. Please share and know you are not alone. Writing is hard.

MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE:

Be PROUD of your research. Tell us about YOUR research.

Zen for Job Market Candidates:

- "The quality of your job market paper is orthogonal to the quality of your person." ~John DiNardo #RIP
- "You only need *one* job. The first offer you get is the *best* job. Re-evaluate only if you get a second offer." ~Matthew Shapiro (best and my only chair)

Title:

- Should signal the main finding in your paper.
- Aim for compelling not cute.
- Get feedback from others.

Structure of Introduction (in order):

THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR PAPER

1) Motivation (1 paragraph)

- Must be about the economics.
- NEVER start with literature or new technique (unless econometrics).
- Be specific and motivate YOUR research question.

2) Research question (1 paragraph)

- Lead with YOUR question.
- THEN set YOUR question within *most* relevant literature.
- My favorite is an actual question: "My paper answers the question ..."
- Popular and acceptable: "My paper [studies/quantifies/evaluates/etc] ..."

3) Main contribution (2-3 paragraphs, one for each contribution)

- YOUR main contribution:
  - MUST be about new economic knowledge.
  - Lead with YOUR work, *then* how it extends the literature.
- New model, new data, new method, etc.:
  - Can be second or third contribution.
  - Tools are important, not *most* important.
- Each paragraph begins with a sentence stating one of YOUR contributions.
- THEN follow with three or four sentences setting YOUR contribution in literature.
- Most important should be first (preferred) or last (sometimes most logical).
- YOUR contributions are very important. Make them clear, compelling, and correct.

4) Method (1-2 paragraphs, one for each method)

- Each paragraph begins with a sentence or two summarizing one of YOUR methods.
- Lead with YOUR most important model, identification, or empirical method.
- THEN follow with a few sentences that sets YOUR method in literature.
- Save technical points, model assumptions for the model section.

5) Findings (2 to 3 paragraphs, one for each main finding)

- Each paragraph begins with a sentence or two summarizing one of YOUR findings.
- Most important should be first (preferred) or last (sometimes most logical).
- THEN follow with three or four sentences setting YOUR finding in literature.
- YOUR findings are very important. Make them clear, compelling, and correct.

5) Robustness Check (optional 1 paragraph)

- Choose robustness check that best supports YOUR most important finding.

6) Roadmap of paper (1 paragraph)

- One sentence for each section of YOUR paper.
- Be specific to YOUR paper, if possible.

PS My structure is NOT only structure that works well. See other excellent writing advice here. Your chair may disagree. LISTEN to people who decide on your PhD. Look at best papers in general-interest journals from best researchers in your field. Innovate on economics, not on structure of YOUR paper.

PPS set YOUR research in context of prior research. We stand on the shoulders of giants. Even so, do NOT bury YOUR contribution after two sentences (or two paragraphs, yikes!) on others' contribution. Do not share YOUR research in the order you did it.

Structure of Abstract (in order):

ALSO VERY IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR PAPER

- Write AFTER you are happy with YOUR introduction.
- Same structure as introduction, but sentences not paragraphs.
- Use main points from YOUR introduction. Focus on YOUR work

Did YOU see a pattern? Yes, YOUR job market paper is about YOU!

Tables and Charts

- Font size must not cause eye strain.
- ABSOLUTELY NO acronyms ANYWHERE in tables and charts.
- ABSOLUTELY NO equation symbols or variables names without WORDS too.
- Must convey takeaway within 10 seconds, without main text.
- Try to make charts for YOUR main findings. Here are [examples](#).
- Label EVERY axis. Label EVERY column header.
- Use as few decimal places as possible.
- Must be clear what line goes with what label, including when print black and white.

Other Random Economist Tips (not in any order):

- Your paper is ALWAYS about YOUR work. Lead with YOU and then others.
- Get feedback on YOUR abstract and introduction:
  - Ask classmate (different field)
  - Professor (in addition to chair)
  - Follow-up nicely until they do.
- Let READER decide what is "important," "obvious," "surprising," etc.
- Do NOT annoy reader by being grandiose. NO bait and switch.
- NO causal words for NON-causal estimates.
- NO shame in non-causal results. We can't run experiments (thank goodness) for many questions in economics. Solid empirical work MATTERS.
- Do NOT trash prior research or call out its limitations or mistakes. TONE matters. Tell us what YOUR paper ADDS. They added too or you wouldn't cite them.
- Do NOT have stand-alone literature review section (unless adviser demands).
  - Integrate literature throughout your paper to set YOUR work in context.
  - Describe YOUR contributions, methods, and results *before* related literature.
- NO acronyms.
  - MPC is widely known in economics. I still use "spending propensity" or "spent $0.X0 out of every additional dollar within two weeks of receipt."
- ABSOLUTELY NO acronyms for terms:
  - YOU create. (Avoid creating new terms.)
  - Terms created in last 25 years.
- NO economic jargon in introduction and abstract until explain in people words.
  - Know people words for economic jargon that YOU use.
  - MUST explain what is source of "endogenous," or "endogeneity".
- Use jargon (and use it correctly) in the body of the paper.
  - Show that YOU know YOUR technical stuff.
  - Still useful to explain most important point in generalist economist words.
  - Macro folks be careful here, we are less beloved.

- Latex folks: Do NOT embed hyperlinks to your references.
  - Many read from PDF. Annoying to accidentally click and land far away.
  - Do NOT annoy reader and do NOT waste their time.
  - Who cares when the old farts got finally their paper published? Obsessed will simply check references for their name.
  - If you (still) want these links, make back buttons. Tips [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- Cite papers *most* related to YOUR paper. YOU are not writing a survey.
  - Use standard citations in text: (Author-Name, Paper-Year).
  - Cite most recent version of papers.
  - Check results YOU cite remain in their latest version.
- Make sure YOUR tone is NEUTRAL and stick to the facts.
- Use "my paper" not "this paper." After citing others, "this" is ambiguous.
- Save policy implications for conclusion.

Other Random Anyone Tips:

- Say what YOU need to say and no more. Delete extra sentences.
- Keep sentences short. Make one point.
- Break long sentences or ones with more than one point in multiple sentences.
- Avoid "There are/is." Re-write and shorten sentence. For example, change "There are problems." to "Problems exist."
- Be sparing with adverbs and adjectives.
- Avoid clauses at beginning of sentence. Start "my paper" "I model" "I find."
- NO acronyms. Acronyms exclude new people.
- Read first sentence of every paragraph. Together they should tell YOUR paper.

All the best on the job market!!

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economist - my views here are my own [View all posts by Claudia Sahm](#)