Instructions for One-Page Proposal

PPPA 8022
Spring 2023

By **February 1**, you must turn in a one-page proposal for your empirical replication project. Save a tree – don't make a cover sheet! I will provide comments within a week so that you can get to work.

The goal in this replication project is two-fold. The first key goal is for you to engage with issues of causality though an empirical lens. When selecting a paper, be sure that the paper is making a causal claim and that one of the following is true: (a) the paper has an empirical strategy for identifying a causal effect or (b) you have an empirical strategy for identifying a causal effect that you can add to the paper.

To maximize your chances of success and to get good advice from me, use a technique that we study in this class, or one that is closely related. If you would like to write a dissertation relying on an estimation technique not from this class, and would like to replicate a related paper, please discuss this with me in office hours before turning a proposal.

The second key goal is for you to engage in hands-on data preparation. You can satisfy this goal in one of two ways. The first method is for you to assemble data yourself for a paper you've chosen. This means download the original raw data and put the data together. If, instead, you prefer to replicate a paper that has data already assembled and available on the journal or author's website, you need to propose a substantive addition to these data that you will undertake that will help us better test the hypothesis at issue. "Substantive" is at my discretion, and is part of what I review with this proposal.

Whether or not you use the author's data, you must write your own code. You will submit code as part of the final assignment.

Begin by reading the *Public Finance Review* article on the value of replication. Broadly, these are the terms of reference for the first part of this project, with the exception that the paper will probably be a little shorter than a full-length manuscript given the time constraints of the semester. That means that your first task is to replicate the author's findings with the original data.

In addition to replicating the paper, you must also extend the paper. "Extend" is up to your definition. You could add years, analyze a different country, add a key control variable, or whatever you can think of. In general, a good extension will provide a test of a contention in the paper.

In your one-page proposal, I expect that you will
* Identify the paper you'd like to replicate
* Identify if you are working by yourself (required for PhD students) or with a partner
* Explain whether you are assembling data or making a "substantive addition"
* If making a "substantive addition," explain clearly what that will be
* Confirm to me that the data are accessible. This means download and unzip them, not have a vague idea that they exist. (This holds for data and programs for papers that have posted data.)
* If you plan to replicate on a different dataset, explain why that's of interest
* Explain how you plan to extend the paper

Evaluation

- The measure of success is not whether you are able to exactly match the published results.
- A successful paper can match the results
  - explain what steps you took to do so
  - expand on the specifications presented in the paper, assessing how robust they are
  - interpret the qualitative significance of the alternative specifications
- A successful paper can also fail to match the results
  - explaining what the steps you took to attempt to match
  - offer hypotheses as to why the match was unsuccessful
  - interpret the qualitative significance of the failure to match
  - evaluate whether the results are robust to alternative specifications
- Either type of paper should be clear and organized. This applies to the paper as a whole, and to the explanation of the empirical strategies and concerns about causality.
- A successful extension of a paper
  - adds intellectual value
  - and extends what we learn from the paper

See previous years' most successful papers on the course webpage, resources tab.

How to find a paper

It has become increasingly difficult to find published papers with publicly available data. That said, many such papers still exist, and students use them in this class. To find a paper with publicly available data you can look at papers published in the 1990s and early 2000s. Avoid papers that discuss "restricted" data, which means that the data are not public. Unfortunately, this includes most property level data. Some journals, including all *American Economic Review* and *American Economic Journal* papers in recent years, require authors to post data.

How to turn in

Go to the "for students" google folder and create (if you have not already) a subfolder named "lastname_firstname". Turn this and all work in to this folder. You should name this assignment "proposal_lastname.pdf".

This assignment is due online at the beginning of Lecture 3.