ARE 298 – PhD Seminar   Fall 2002

When reading/writing a paper

What is the research question?

What are the goals of the paper?

    Develop a method?

        To solve what problem?

        What techniques? Could you find other possibly more adequate ones?

        Why is previous existing work inadequate?

        Why are previously used techniques less adequate?

        Could techniques presented be applied in other settings?

    Answer a policy question?

    Test models?

    Measure an effect?

Why should we care about the question?

Why does the author/do you (writing it) care? Is he right?

What is theoretical foundation? How appropriate to answer question above?

If empirical paper, what testable theoretical implications?

How linked theoretical and empirical models?

What data are used?

What variables are used in the model?

    What are the endogenous variables?

    What are the exogenous variables?

    How is endogeneity addressed? Credible?

What variation in the data identifies the elements of the model?

Did the author make any (unreasonable, distributional) assumptions for identification?

Did the author make robustness checks for those assumptions?

What are the conclusions?

Are there other alternative interpretations of the results?

Does the author formally test for/informally considers those alternative explanations?

Is there anything that makes alternative explanations less likely?

What do we take away from the paper?

For structural papers:

Why author chooses structural empirical model?

Could the question be addressed with another approach?

What is the source of identification?

Could the model be generalized in any immediate way?

Does the model capture the key features of the market being analyzed?

If not, what is missing that seems to be important?

Is there a clear idea of what are the implications from ignoring that?

For non-structural papers:

Why author chooses that empirical model?

Could one impose a structure and gain in terms of estimation of parameters of interest that one otherwise cannot?

Are the parameter interpretations clear?

Are the hypothesis test implications clear?

Does the author test for specification of the model?