

Instructions for One-Page Proposal

PPPA 8022
Spring 2021

By **February 3**, you must turn in a one-page (max two-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 through 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 good advice from me, use a technique that we study in this class, or one that is closely related.

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
- Whether you are making a "substantive addition" or assembling data yourself, you must 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 the existing paper.)
- 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.