ACCY 8001/8104
DOCTORAL SEMINAR IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Contemporary Topics in Accounting Research
Fall 2016

Objectives

The goals are to

- Introduce you to a wide variety of mainstream research in accounting and related (finance and economics) areas
- Improve your ability to critically evaluate research papers
- Enhance your understanding of research designs and develop your ability to produce a research paper
- Identify topics for future research

Format

We use open seminar format where we discuss about 3 to 4 papers per session. Each student leads the discussion of one of the papers in that session (papers are to be allocated in the 1st meeting). Each set of readings is composed of one or two influential “classics” and one or two recent papers.

The presenter discusses the following issues.

1. What is (are) the research question(s)?
2. What are the main findings and where are they reported (identify one or two tables)?
3. What are the key research methodologies?
4. How well do reported results support the author’s conclusion? Are there remaining, unresolved issues? Are there alternative explanations?
5. Why do you think the topic and results are important or interesting?
6. How could the study be improved or extended?

The presentation should last about 30 minutes. The remaining time is devoted to discussions and lecture. As homework, non-presenting students must upload, on the course blackboard, at least two questions—conceptual, technical, or empirical—for each of the remaining papers, by 6PM Tuesday, prior to the Wednesday session. I am not expecting that the presenter knows everything about the paper or can answer all questions (neither can I!).
**Evaluation**

1. Presentations (20%): Described above.

2. Homework (20%): Described above.

3. Participation (30%): Read the assigned papers thoroughly to the extent that you can explain the paper’s content to a lay person and make useful comments and questions.

4. A research project (30%): Write an empirical research paper by **Monday, December 5**, to be presented on the 14th session (**December 7**). While I am not expecting a publishable paper, I expect it to be substantive, and have the following key components, as a minimum – 1) introduction, 2) literature review, 3) methodology and data, and 4) hopefully (but not required), results. More advanced papers get more credit. The paper should not be overlapping with the one you use in another class to fulfill the requirement of that class.

   A plan statement describing what you intend to do for your final project is due on **Nov. 2**.

**Organization**

Each student is responsible for obtaining a copy (or pdf files) of the papers to be discussed. Most, if not all, of the papers are downloadable by googling the title of the paper within the GW intranet.
READING LIST AND CLASS SCHEDULE

Read the main articles (numbered) carefully. Skim the secondary, background articles (bulleted) to get an idea of what they are doing and what the findings are.

Session 1 (8/31)

A. Course Preview and Class Organization

B. Accounting earnings and Cash flows

Influential background papers


   No need to read this paper thoroughly, but try to understand how Fig. 1 (p. 169) is created, and interpret it.


   Background reading (everyone should read to find out the key conclusions):


September 7: No Class. Moved to Nov. 22 (Tuesday) 1-4 PM.

Session 2 (9/14)

Differences between Accounting earnings, Cash flows, and Accruals

1. Financial Statement Analysis case: Cash flow vs. Earnings. (This case and the associated excel spreadsheet can be downloaded from blackboard.)

   - Submit a report answering questions 1, 3, and 4 in the case.


**Additional Reading**

**Session 3 (9/21)**

**Security Analysts**


**Additional Readings**

**Session 4 (9/27)**

**Information Content of Earnings and Management Disclosures**


Additional Readings


**Session 5 (10/5)**

Management Disclosure Effect and Strategy


Read this background paper:

Additional Readings:

Session 6 (10/12)

Earnings Management—Detecting Earnings Management

Skim these Influential papers:


Additional Reading:

Session 7 (10/19)

Earnings Quality, Accrual Quality


**Background reading:**


**Session 8 (10/26)**

**CEOs, Agency Problems**


**Influential Background Papers (skim these papers before you read the main articles)**


**Session 9 (11/2)**

**A plan statement describing what you intend to do for your final project if due today.**

**Accounting Anomalies**


**Influential Background Papers (skim these papers before you read the main articles)**


**Additional Reading:**


**Session 10 (11/9)**

**Accounting, Corporate Social Responsibility and Trust**


**Additional Reading:**


**Session 11 (11/16)**

**Conservatism**


Additional Readings


Session 12 (11/22) --Tuesday

Earnings Management—Recent Advances


Additional Reading:
Session 13 (11/30)

CEO compensation


Influential Background Papers (skim these papers before you read the main articles)


Session 14 (12/7)

Presentation of Individual Research

Below are recommended Readings on Methodology


