Economics 406: Topics in Microeconomics
Final Project

Your final project, worth 80% of your grade, will be to perform your own education research project which is due during the last official class period (when the final is normally scheduled). This project will be submitted in the form of a paper which uses some technique outlined in this class.

Your project must present or test some economic theory. Presenting a theory would involve describing your theory and explaining why it is interesting. Testing an existing theory is most easily done using statistical methods. You may use any data that you can collect or create for this purpose. I have placed a number of high quality, research-ready data sets that you can use on my webpage.

A quality research paper takes time and structure. The format that I look for in these papers is:
1. An introduction describing the question/issue you are addressing.
2. A discussion of the relevant literature that has been written on the ideas you are addressing
3. A description of the theory you are testing as well as a description of how this theory fits in with the findings of the research described in part 2.
4. (If you are using data) A description of your data (this includes a verbal description and a statistical description). This section should tie in with your theory; that is you should answer why this data is appropriate to use in measuring your data.
5. Your findings.
6. A conclusion that reviews your theory in light of your findings.

Good economic writing is good writing in general. Thus be concerned with issues such as sentence structure and grammar. Further, most students papers tend to focus on the technical aspects of the paper while paying short attention to the theories under consideration. Although this course will focus on many technical aspects, good economic writing never stresses the technical aspect at the expense of the theory being tested. For good examples of this, I refer the student to "The Deadweight Loss of Christmas," by Joel Waldfogel. In short, remembering who your audience is will always improve your paper.

You will be graded on the quality of your writing, the quality of your regressions, and your application of those regressions to the research question your paper addresses.

Finally, some words of advice. Invariably I have students spend too much time looking for the "right" data set or question. Although the right data is important to long term research, finding a perfect data set rarely happens nor is it good policy to for students to spend precious weeks throughout the short quarter looking for data. Rather, I would have you choose a research question early (like the first week of the quarter) and then apply what we learn throughout the course to your question. When it comes time to compile your results for your paper, you will find much of your work to be finished already.