

ECO 307: Introductory Econometrics
Building Your Project Idea
Instructor: James Murray

Purpose: The purpose of this writing assignment is think about how you will narrow down your research topic and start planning some of the details.

No audience: This is informal writing. There is no “audience” for your work. While your instructor will assign a pass/fail grade based on your effort for each of these assignments, the instructor is not your audience. The purpose of these writing assignments is not to communicate anything to anyone. The purpose is writing to learn. You write these assignments for your own benefit only. Working through these writing assignments provides a structured approach to help you grow in your understanding of how to apply econometric techniques to an empirical project.

Share your work: You will complete these assignments in a public Google Drive folder shared with all other students in the class. All the students in the class can see your work, learn from it, and even use it to help them complete their own work. You can also read other students’ submissions to help you think about how you want to think through your work.

Use your previous writing assignment: Some of the questions below intentionally overlap with the questions from your previous writing assignment. You have previously identified a broad idea and some potential sources for data to work with. The purpose here is to take the next step in refining your project idea, motivating your project idea, and think about how you will conduct your analysis.

1. Provide a tentative title for your project.
2. Provide a one or two paragraph description of your project. Cite some sources.
3. Why is your project interesting? Who would want to *voluntarily* read your work and why?
4. What is the *causal relationship of interest*? You are looking for identifying cause and effect. What variable(s) do you think may be causing what other variable(s)?
5. What are potential sources of bias? Think about why you or someone else might have doubts that *causation* exists, even if you find correlation. Think beyond the general caution, "correlation isn't causation." With your variables, what else may be causing correlation if the causation is not the explanation? How might you take care of this problem?
6. List the variables you plan on using at this point. Include a definition for each and a link to the source for each specific variable. For each variable, provide a link that takes you directly to that variable. That is, do not just a link to all of IPUMS or all of the American Community Survey. You have already done this on a previous assignment, but you may have changed your mind or identified additional variables to include. Try to make an improvement upon what you have already done.