

How to lead a class discussion (EE489 Seminar)

For most parts of the class, I hope that students will learn how economists ask questions about industrial organizations and how they perform proper research to obtain convincing answers. All students are responsible to read every paper, whether or not they are assigned to lead class discussion. However, it is likely that most will not thoroughly understand the paper. Your (the leaders') job is to help them understand the main points of the paper through their class discussions.

Here are my suggestions on what you could do to lead a 40-minutes class discussion

1. Start with a brief background of the paper – don't give too much background. You can also ask other students to volunteer to give a brief background.
2. Ask easy questions first. This way, other students will become more comfortable to discuss. Here are some examples of easy questions
 - a. What is/are the question(s) this paper tries to answer?
 - b. What is/are the method(s) used to answer the question?
 - i. If the method is econometrics, then
 1. What type of data was used? (cross-sectional, time-series or panel data)
 2. How/Where did the author obtain the data?
 3. What are the variables included in the regressions?
 - c. What are the results?
3. Then, you can move on to harder questions. For example:
 - a. Do you think the questions are interesting enough? What benefits do we get from knowing the answer?
 - b. What economic theory was used in this paper?
 - c. Do you think the method adopted to answer research question is appropriate?
 - d. Are the variables used in econometric models appropriate? Any suggestion for additional control variables?
 - e. Do you think the results are convincing? Why?

****** Again, the leaders should be able to answer all the above questions. This way, they can respond to feedbacks given by other students in class.