Presentation of Topic

On February 5 or 10, you will make a class presentation on your research topic. This presentation should be 5 to 7 minutes long. It should definitely be no longer than 10 minutes, and I will hold you to this time limit.

I suggest that you begin with a succinct statement of your research question — something like “In my project I plan to look at the how right to work laws affect the ability of unions to form and survive.”

You will then need to explain to the class in more detail the program or policy that you are examining. This may include the history leading up to the enactment of the policy, changes in the policy or program over time, etc. You can discuss some of the arguments for and against the policy or program prior to its enactment, and since. You may need to explain how and why this program or policy was or is expected to affect the outcome you are examining. If you have come across related research on the topic, you can talk briefly about that as well. Finally, you should talk about your planned empirical strategy; that is, the data you plan to use and the regressions you will be running or comparisons you will be making.

In making the presentation, you will find it helpful to make up an overhead slide that outlines your talk. This does not need to be fancy, but should list the main points you are making and serve as a guide to your talk.

Further notes on Choosing a Topic and Finding Sources

Each of you should find at least one article that has been published in a professional economics journal and that is on (or related to) your topic. In fact, for those of you who have been having difficulty choosing a topic, a good way to proceed is to search the economics journals on JSTOR (www.jstor.org) for an article on a topic that interests you. You can then scan a few of these articles (and really read two or three) to get ideas on how to proceed. In fact, the data from many published articles are available from the author(s). A good project would be to obtain data from the author of an article and replicate the author’s findings. Alternatively, you might be able to update or add to the data used by an author, or find a different source of data, and examine how a different data set affects the findings.

The point is that the work presented in your project does not need to be wholly original. The project must be your own work and must add something to our understanding of an issue. But there is little under the sun that is truly new, and following the example of an earlier and more experienced researcher can be a good way to learn. (I am not trying to discourage originality here. I just want you to be realistic in your goals and to see that the research project is meant to be both doable and a useful learning experience.)