

Economics 111B
Referee Report Assignment:
The Economics of Pandemics
(Due in Canvas on Sunday, July 26 before 10 p.m.)

Department of Economics
UC Davis

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Summer 2020

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to the publication process in economics and economic history. While a textbook summarizes the main results of thousands of published articles and books, it is important to see how economic history research is actually done.

This report is worth a possible of 70 points if it is turned in before the deadline of Sunday, July 26 by 10 p.m. For each 24-hour period after the deadline, there will be an automatic 15-point deduction. So, for a submission within 24-hours after the deadline the maximum possible score is 55 points, in the next 24-hours after that 40 points maximum, 25 points maximum in the next 24-hours and so on. As a result, the assignment is worth a maximum of zero points after 10 p.m. on Thursday, July 30 so no referee reports are accepted after this time.

All reports must be typed and double-spaced with appropriate font sizes, correct spelling and grammar, and with a widely-used reference style if you reference other papers or sources. Most economists use the Chicago Manual of Style (https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html), so this is strongly recommended.

Your final report is to be uploaded into Canvas under Assignments as a PDF file (preferred), but it can also be a Microsoft Word document. Details on the composition and length of the report are described below.

What is a Referee Report?

A referee report is a critical part of the peer-review process in academic research. When an article is submitted to an academic journal for possible publication, the editor of the journal sends out the paper to several experts who are familiar with the topic and who can evaluate the contributions and limitations of the submitted article.

Imagine that you have been selected by a journal editor **to review one of two articles below** for possible publication. It is up to you to decide which of the two articles to review, but you only have to review one article for the report. Note that the two papers below are written by authors from UC Davis:

Jordà, Òscar, Sanjay R. Singh, Alan M. Taylor, "Longer-Run Economic Consequences of Pandemics," *Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Working Paper 2020-09* (June 2020), 1-19.

Lin, Peter Zhixian, and Christopher M. Meissner, "A Note on Long-Run Persistence of Public Health Outcomes in Pandemics," *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 27119* (May 2020), 1-32.

Your report is intended for the authors of the paper and for the journal editor. There is no absolute length requirement, but I would expect most reports to be between 3 and 5 double-spaced pages, and it should include the following parts:

- A summary of the paper, which discusses the main research question(s), the methodology used by the authors, and the main conclusions and contributions of the paper.
- A discussion of whether the question or questions asked are important (or not) and whether you find the results from paper convincing or not (and why?)
- A discussion of the concerns you have with the paper. These concerns could be related to the data being used, the theoretical model or models, the empirical methods, sample selection issues (do the data seem to be a representative sample?), possible alternative explanations for the results that the authors do not consider (or do not consider sufficiently), and any other weaknesses of the paper, which might include anything, including poor grammar, poor writing, or misspellings.
- A referee report is meant to be constructive criticism, so, whenever possible, provide possible suggestions for improvement.
- Finally, your report should include a recommendation to the editor on whether to accept the paper for publication in its current form, to suggest that the authors revise and later resubmit the paper for publication with suggested revisions, or to reject the paper for publication.

For more detailed guidelines on writing a referee report, see:

Berk, Jonathan B., Campbell R. Harvey, and David Hirshleifer, "Preparing a Referee Report: Guidelines and Perspectives," (November 21, 2016), available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2547191> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2547191>