Instructions for referee report

Due date:

April 7th, 2009

Selection of the paper

You must complete a referee report about a paper that is yet unpublished (this excludes papers that are forthcoming in a particular journal). You could select a working paper from a faculty member or a job market paper from a job market candidate on the market this year. Please make sure to select a paper that is somewhat related to the topics we cover in class and that it is a topic that interests you. Please submit by email the name of the author and title of the paper you will do your report on by MARCH 3rd, 2009.

Detailed instructions

A referee report includes two distinct parts: a letter to the editor and a report to the authors and editors. The first is never shown to the authors while the second is shared with them.

The letter to the editor usually includes a very short summary of the paper, a decision regarding the paper (reject, revise and re-submit or accept with minor revisions) and a justification of such a decision. The decision itself is usually less important than the clarity of the arguments made to justify it. The editor will eventually make the call regarding this paper and so your own decision is not as influential as the explanations you give. This document should be no more than 3 paragraphs long.

The report should include a summary of the article IN YOUR OWN WORDS (that is, not the abstract the authors already wrote). This is important to provide the editor a good overview of the paper but also to give a sense to the authors of what the reader understood from the paper. It should also include a list of comments, usually somewhat ordered by importance although not always. Comments can be positive or negative but usually must be constructive. The entirety of the comments should also lead the author to transform the actual paper, not lead the authors to need to write 3 more papers to complete all the changes proposed. Comments can range from discussion of things that are unclear, missing important references, issues with theoretical modeling or empirical specification, etc. The entire report should not exceed 3 pages.

There are various websites on-line that offer advice regarding writing a referee report. Feel free to consult those or other sources (like the “Guide to a Young Economist”) as well as myself to help your writing.