Econ Job Market Meeting Notes
Meeting hosted by Shachar Kariv, notes by Leslie
Wednesday, September 1

• The job market should not be all about sweat, blood, and tears. If you don’t enjoy the job market, academia is probably not the right place for you. It will be stressful, but never again in your career will you get so much attention, particularly from people outside of your field.

• Go on the market if your advisor thinks that you’re ready and you think that an additional year of research won’t dramatically improve your candidacy. It’s a bad sign if job market predictions are the main deciding factor for you.

• You need to know **now** who your letter writers are, and they need to know each other. A good letter is like a referee report: your letter writers need to know your paper very well – strengths and limitations. They need to be able to write about your paper better than you can.

• Reserve AEA hotel rooms once you can.

• Apply widely – include business and policy schools in your search.

• When you discuss your work, you need to prove that your research is 1) interesting, 2) not trivial, and 3) that nobody did it already.

• Form groups to proofread each others’ papers carefully. Have at least two friends proofread your paper; maybe hire a smart undergrad to proofread too.

• Shachar thinks that the JMP should be written to experts in your field and structured exactly like you would write a paper to submit to a journal. Bob Anderson disagreed – he wanted a long introduction that makes your paper understandable to faculty outside your field.

• Top schools only open 50 or so application packets. The school’s search committee talks with the placement chairs and faculty members at your school to decide what to open. These packets, and a few that other faculty from that school may want to add, are then handed to experts in your field. When Berkeley receives applications, all the faculty in your field read your JMP – you get an interview if they all agree.

• At lower ranked schools, or at smaller schools that might not have experts in your field, the search committee will rely much more on recommendation letters and the introduction to your JMP.

• If you get flown out it will be because the faculty in your field are championing you. The rest of the faculty will form their opinions of you based on your job market talk. They might also read the introduction to your (updated) JMP right before your talk. The talk is there to help the faculty in your field convince the other faculty in the department that you’re good.

• You should have a clear “home” field. It’s hard to be exciting to more than one field. Also, if you don’t there will be coordination problems – both fields will worry that they’ll be paying for you but will never see you. You need people to actively champion you. Talk with your advisor if you’re potentially in this situation.
• Present in department and field seminars. Be somewhat careful in the timing – you want to present early, but faculty will also be forming their opinions of you from your seminar. Immediately after you talk schedule meetings with everyone who came in order to get their feedback.

• The best way to prepare for interviews is to meet seminar speakers. Talk about your work with them and ask them intelligent questions about their work. Mock interviews with your friends or people who already know your research very well are not as useful.

• Unless your JMP is sensational, you should to have at least one other paper well underway by the time you are interviewing. You need to be able to talk about more than one thing. When asked about your other ideas, you don’t want to have to talk about something that you only started thinking about 5 minutes earlier.

• Be honest with your advisors/placement chair. If you tell them that you’re “really interested” in Michigan and then accept a less prestigious job elsewhere, they’ll kill you. Don’t destroy their ability to help future students.

• A lot of information posted online about who received what offers, etc. is incorrect. Don’t waste your time.