

**BPE Senior Seminar**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Pablo Querubín**  
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**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the challenges and methods involved in conducting empirical research in political economy. We start by introducing the fundamental problem of causal inference. We then discuss a wide range of empirical methods commonly used in empirical papers such as ordinary least squares regression, randomized experiments, survey experiments, natural experiments, difference-in-differences and regression discontinuity designs. These methods are illustrated with empirical papers in political economy covering a wide range of topics and world regions. By the end of the course, students should be able to formulate a research question, identify the empirical challenges involved in addressing it, and propose different empirical methods to answer the question given the data available. These tools should prepare students to write an excellent BPE senior paper.

**Time and Location:** Monday and Wednesday 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Zoom link for each session is available via NYU Classes.

**Office hours:** Wednesday 2:00pm-3:30pm. Please sign up in advance using the following link <https://calendly.com/pablo-querubin/office-hours>

**TA:** Carlos Felipe Balcazar ([cfb310@nyu.edu](mailto:cfb310@nyu.edu)).

**Requirements:** All students are expected to have completed the relevant readings before the class meeting each week. The course is not taught from a single textbook. Instead, weekly readings will be drawn from two required textbooks, and from a collection of articles (whenever possible, these readings will be posted on the NYU Classes course site). You should aim to evaluate critically the empirical evidence advanced in each reading. Some of the readings contain sections that are a bit technical.

**Grading:**

The final grade is based on: a research proposal, a midterm, a final presentation, overall class participation and the BPE senior paper. They will count toward the grade as follows:

Research proposal (**September 30<sup>th</sup>**): 10%

Midterm (**October 26<sup>st</sup>**): 20%

Final presentation (**November 30<sup>th</sup> through December 9<sup>th</sup>**):\* 20%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

BPE senior paper: 40%

*\* For those graduating early, recall that your presentations will take place on October 19 and 21.*

**Policies:**

-Students are expected to have completed the required reading before the class.

-Class attendance is strongly encouraged: we will offer cover topics not included in the required readings that you will be expected to know for the exams. In addition I may conduct unannounced short quizzes in some lectures.

-Make sure you read and adhere strictly to the basic principles of Academic Integrity (<http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>) as well as the Honor Code (<http://cas.nyu.edu/page/honorcode>).

### **Lecture Schedule and Readings**

**Assigned readings are marked with a (\*\*) and will be announced at least two weeks prior to the corresponding lecture. Make sure you check this online version of the syllabus regularly for the most updated version. For any doubts or questions please email the TA Carlos F. Balcazar at [cfb310@nyu.edu](mailto:cfb310@nyu.edu)**

**Readings will be uploaded to this dropbox link at least 15 days in advance.**

#### **A. Introduction to empirical research in the social sciences**

##### **Introduction to causal inference (September 2, 9, 14)**

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2008). Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion. Princeton university press. Chapter 1. (\*\*)

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2014). Mastering metrics: The path from cause to effect. Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1. (\*\*)

Huntington-Klein, N. (2019). The Effect: An introduction to research design and causality. Chapters 3 and 4. (\*\*)

##### **Bias and all-else-equal comparisons (September 16, 21, 23)**

Almond, D., Chay, K. Y., & Lee, D. S. (2005). The costs of low birth weight. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120, 1031–1083. (\*\*)

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2008). Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion. Princeton university press. Chapter 2, pp. 11-22 (\*\*)

Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American economic review*, 94, 991–1013. (\*\*)

##### **How to write a research paper? (September 28)**

Bellemare, M. (2020). How to write a paper in applied economics. *Unpublished manuscript, MIT*. (\*\*)

Cochrane, J. H. (2005). Writing Tips for Ph. D. Students. *Unpublished manuscript, Chicago Booth*. (\*\*)

Creedy, J. (2001). Starting research. *The Australian Economic Review*, 34, 116–124.

Day, R. A., & Gastel, B. (n.d.). How to write and publish a scientific paper. Cambridge University Press.

Huntington-Klein, N. (2019). The Effect: An introduction to research design and causality. Chapters 1 and 2. (\*\*)

Schwabish, J. A. (2014). An economist's guide to visualizing data. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 28, 209–34. (\*\*)

Shapiro, J. *Four Steps to an Applied Micro Paper*. unpublished. (\*\*)

## B. Research designs

### B.1. Randomized control trials: The Gold Standard

#### **Field experiments (September 30, October 5, 7)**

Balboni, C., Bandiera O., Burgess, R., Ghatak, M. and Heil, A. "Why do People Stay Poor?", available in "<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/eopp/eopp67.pdf>

Beath, A., Christia, F., & Enikolopov, R. (2017). Can Development Programs Counter Insurgencies?: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan.

Bhandari, A. (2019). The Political Determinants of Economic Exchange: Evidence from a Business Experiment in Senegal. *Journal Article*.

Bidwell, K., Casey, K., & Glennerster, R. (2020). Debates: Voting and expenditure responses to political communication. *Journal of Political Economy*, 128(8), 2880-2924.

Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American political Science review*, 33-48. (\*\*)

Hjort, J. (2014). Ethnic divisions and production in firms. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129, 1899-1946.

Lowe, M. (2020). Types of contact: A field experiment on collaborative and adversarial caste integration.

Mousa, S. (2020). Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq. *Science*, 369, 866-870.

Olken, B. A. (2007). Monitoring corruption: evidence from a field experiment in Indonesia. *Journal of political Economy*, 115, 200-249. (\*\*)

Royer, H., Stehr, M., & Sydnor, J. (2015). Incentives, commitments, and habit formation in exercise: evidence from a field experiment with workers at a fortune-500 company. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 7, 51-84.

#### **Lab/Survey experiments (October 12)**

Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S. (2012, 3). Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. *Political Analysis*, 20, 351-368. Retrieved from <http://goo.gl/bIciQ>

Gilligan, M. J., Pasquale, B. J., & Samii, C. (2014). Civil war and social cohesion: Lab-in-the-field evidence from Nepal. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58, 604-619.

Habyarimana, J., Humphreys, M., Posner, D. N., & Weinstein, J. M. (2007). Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision? *American Political Science Review*, 709-725. (\*\*)

Hainmueller, J., & Hiscox, M. J. (2010). Attitudes toward highly skilled and low-skilled immigration: Evidence from a survey experiment. *American political science review*, 61-84. (\*\*)

Healy, A. and Lenz, G.S. (2014), Substituting the End for the Whole: Why Voters Respond Primarily to the Election-Year Economy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58: 31-47.

doi:[10.1111/ajps.12053](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12053) (\*\*)

Kuziemko, I., Norton, M. I., Saez, E., & Stantcheva, S. (2015). How elastic are preferences for redistribution? Evidence from randomized survey experiments. *American Economic Review*, 105, 1478-1508. (\*\*)

Munger, K. (2017). Tweetment effects on the tweeted: Experimentally reducing racist harassment. *Political Behavior*, 39, 629–649.

## B.2. Observational methods

### **Regression and Control Variables (October 14, 28)**

Alsan, M. (2015). The effect of the tsetse fly on African development. *American Economic Review*, 105, 382–410.

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2008). Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion. Princeton university press. Chapter 2, pp. 22-24 (\*\*)

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2014). Mastering metrics: The path from cause to effect. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2. (\*\*)

Meng, X., Qian, N., & Yared, P. (2015). The institutional causes of China's great famine, 1959–1961. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 82, 1568–1611 (\*\*).

Nunn, N., & Puga, D. (2012). Ruggedness: The blessing of bad geography in Africa. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 94, 20–36. (\*\*)

Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2014). Propaganda and conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan genocide. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129, 1947–1994.

## Early-graduating students' presentations (October 19, 21)

### **Natural experiments (November 2, November 4)**

Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2001). *Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a India-Wide Randomized Policy Experiment*. Tech. rep., National Bureau of Economic Research.

Dal Bó, E., & Rossi, M. A. (2011). Term length and the effort of politicians. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 78(4), 1237-1263. (\*\*)

Di Tella, R., & Schargrodsky, E. (2004). Do police reduce crime? Estimates using the allocation of police forces after a terrorist attack. *American Economic Review*, 94(1), 115-133. (\*\*)

Fisman, R., & Miguel, E. (2007, 12). Corruption, Norms, and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets. *Journal of Political Economy*, 115, 1020–1048. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/527495>

Madestam, A., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2011). Shaping the Nation: The Effect of Fourth of July on Political Preferences and Behavior in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/dyanagi/Research/FourthOfJuly.pdf>

Madestam, A., Shoag, D., Veuger, S., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2013). Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. doi:10.1093/qje/qjt021

Miguel, E., Satyanath, S., & Sergenti, E. (2004). Economic shocks and civil conflict: An instrumental variables approach. *Journal of political Economy*, 112(4), 725-753. (\*\*)

### **Panel data: Fixed effects and difference in differences (November 9, 11, 16, 18)**

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared (2009). "Reevaluating the Modernization Hypothesis", *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 56, pp. 1043–1058. (\*\*)

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2014). Mastering'metrics: The path from cause to effect. Princeton University Press. Chapter 5.(\*\*)

Baland, Jean-Marie, and James A. Robinson (2008), "Land and power: Theory and evidence from Chile", *American Economic Review*, 98(5): 1737-1765. (\*\*)

Bertrand, M., Bombardini, M., & Trebbi, F. (2014). Is It Whom You Know or What You Know? An Empirical Assessment of the Lobbying Process. *American Economic Review*, 104, 3885-3920. doi:10.1257/aer.104.12.3885(\*\*)

Blanes i Vidal, J., Draca, M., & Fons-Rosen, C. (2012). Revolving Door Lobbyists. *American Economic Review*, 102, 3731-48. doi:10.1257/aer.102.7.3731(\*\*)

Card, D., & Krueger, A. B. (1993). *Minimum wages and employment: A case study of the fast food industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania*. Tech. rep., National Bureau of Economic Research.(\*\*)

Duflo, E. (2001). Schooling and labor market consequences of school construction in Indonesia: Evidence from an unusual policy experiment. *American economic review*, 91, 795–813.(\*\*)

Kudamatsu, M. (2006). Has Democratization Reduced Infant Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa? Evidence from Micro Data. *Journal of the European Economic Association*.(\*\*)

### **Regression discontinuity (November 23, 25)**

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J.-S. (2014). Mastering'metrics: The path from cause to effect. Princeton University Press. Chapter 4. (\*\*)

Asher, S., & Novosad, P. (2017, 1). Politics and Local Economic Growth: Evidence from India. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9, 229-73. Retrieved from <http://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20150512>

Brollo, F., & Troiano, U. (2012). What Happens When a Woman Wins a Close Election? Evidence from Brazil. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.ssrn.com/abstract=1999067>

Dell, M. (2010). The persistent effects of Peru's mining mita. *Econometrica*, 78, 1863–1903.(\*\*)

Dell, M., & Querubin, P. (2018). Nation building through foreign intervention: Evidence from discontinuities in military strategies. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133(2), 701-764.(\*\*)

Eggers, A. C., & Hainmueller, J. (2009, 10). MPs for sale? Returns to office in postwar British politics. *American Political Science Review*, 103, 513.

Fujiwara, T. (2015). Voting technology, political responsiveness, and infant health: Evidence from Brazil. *Econometrica*, 83(2), 423-464.(\*\*)

Lee, D. S. (2008). Randomized experiments from non-random selection in US House elections. *Journal of Econometrics*, 142, 675–697.

Mummolo, J. (2018). Modern police tactics, police-citizen interactions, and the prospects for reform. *The Journal of Politics*, 80, 1–15.

Querubin, P., & Snyder Jr, J. M. (2011). *The control of politicians in normal times and times of crisis: Wealth accumulation by US congressmen, 1850-1880*. Tech. rep., National Bureau of Economic Research.(\*\*)

### **All other students' presentations (November 30, December 2, 3, 9)**