

ECON 712-007 — Topics in Education

Course prospectus

University of Pennsylvania
Margaux Luflade

Spring 2021

Course description

Synopsis. As most second-year Ph.D. courses, this course is designed to help you transition to you conducting your own research. Through the discussion of seminal and recent papers, the goal is to help you gain an understanding of the literature that allows you to come up with original questions of interest and/or new useful methods.

This class will focus on the discussion of education-related questions (see list of topics below). However, I certainly hope the class will be the occasion to discuss models and methods that are useful in economics and empirical micro, beyond the study of education questions. The list of topics below is tentative: I can definitely modify the list to include related topics of interest to students. Feel free to email me if you have suggestions and/or questions.

Logistics and instruction planning

Email: mlufade@sas.upenn.edu

Meeting times: Wednesdays, 5–8pm, Spring session 2.

Office hours: by appointment, feel free to email me.

Typical class structure:

- Lectures will be synchronous, and we'll use the assigned time slot (W 5–8pm). Hopefully, everyone can participate live.
- Each class, we'll discuss in depth two or three papers. For each paper, a group of (2-3) students will be in charge of preparing a presentation of the paper, and leading the discussion. I'll try to give a quick broader view of where these papers fit in the literature and how they are connected to other papers of interest.
- In the last few class sessions, students will make short presentations of their original research ideas.

Assessment

- (Group) presentation and discussion of paper(s)
- Referee report: each student will submit a referee report on a current working paper, for instance a paper currently R&R at a general interest or top field journal. Students can choose papers that fit their interest, and check in with me for approval.
- Term paper: each student will submit an original research proposal. The goal on this assignment is to start the transition to the third year of the Ph.D., during which you'll start developing your own research full time. Typically, the proposal would present the research question; explain why it is an interesting question; and describe the (planned) contributions of the paper to the literature. I don't expect you to submit a fully completed paper, the idea is to give you a deadline for you to put together the beginning of a project that you could further develop over the summer. For instance, if it is an empirical project, the proposal could explain clearly the key empirical challenges, propose an identification strategy and data that could be used. If you don't have a complete identification strategy in mind, clearly establish what you could do with what you have, and what you still need to figure out for the paper to make a contribution. Think about the next steps: at the end of the proposal, establish a to-do list for the summer.

Tentative overview of topics

1. Models of education decisions and choices

- J. Altonji (1993). The demand for and return to education when education outcomes are uncertain. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 11(1, Part 1): 48–83.
- M. Keane, K. Wolpin (1997). The career decisions of young men. *Journal of Political Economy*, 105(2): 2075–91.
- P. Arcidiacono (2004). Ability sorting and the returns to college majors. *Journal of Econometrics*, 121(1–2): 343–75.

2. Skills formation and returns to schooling

- P. Todd, K. Wolpin (2003). On the specification and estimation of the production function for cognitive achievement. *Economic Journal*, 113(485): F3–F33.
- F. Cunha, J. Heckman (2007). The technology of skill formation. *American Economic Review*, 97(2): 31–47.
- F. Cunha, J. Heckman, S. Schennach (2010). Estimating the technology of cognitive and noncognitive skill formation. *Econometrica*, 78(3): 883–931.
- L. Kirkeboen, E. Leuven, M. Mogstad (2016). Field of study, earnings, and self-selection. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 131(2): 1057–112.

3. Peer effects and social interactions

- C. Manski (1993). Identification of endogenous social effects: The reflection problem. *Review of Economic Studies*, 60(3): 531–42.
- W. Brock, S. Durlauf (2001). Discrete choice with social interactions. *Review of Economic Studies*, 68(2): 235–60.
- A. Calvó-Armengol, E. Patacchini, Y. Zenou (2009). Peer effects and social networks in education. *Review of Economic Studies*, 76(4): 1239–67.

4. School choice and mechanism design

- A. Abdulkadiroğlu, T. Sönmez (2003). School choice: a mechanism design approach. *American Economic Review*, 93(3): 729–47.
- N. Agarwal, P. Somaini (2018). Demand analysis using strategic reports: An application to a school choice mechanism. *Econometrica*, 86(2): 391–444.
- G. Fack, J. Grenet, Y. He (2019). Beyond truth-telling: preference estimation with centralized school choice and college admissions. *American Economic Review*, 109(4): 1486–529.

5. School and neighborhood choice

- S. Black (1999). Do better schools matter? Parental valuation of elementary education. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114(2): 577–99.
- P. Bayer, F. Ferreira, R. McMillan (2007). A unified framework for measuring preferences for schools and neighborhoods. *Journal of Political Economy*, 115(4): 588–638.

6. Unequal access to education/ affirmative action

- S. Coate, G. Loury (1993). Will affirmative action policies eliminate negative stereotypes? *American Economic Review*
- P. Arcidiacono (2005). Affirmative action in higher education: How do admission and financial aid rules affect future earnings? *Econometrica*, 73(5): 1477–524.
- D. Epple, R. Romano, H. Sieg (2008). Diversity and affirmative action in higher education. *Journal of Public Economics*
- P. Arcidiacono, E. Aucejo, H. Fang (2012). Affirmative action and mismatch: new test and evidence. *Quantitative Economics*

7. Supply side

- D. Epple, R. Romano, S. Scarpa, H. Sieg (2017). A general equilibrium analysis of state and private colleges and access to higher education in the US. *Journal of Public Economics*, 155: 164–178.
- J. Singleton (2019). Incentives and the supply of effective charter schools. *American Economic Review*, 109(7): 2568–612.