

ECON 712-009 — Topics in Education

Syllabus

University of Pennsylvania
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Fall 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: Monday and Wednesday, 10:15–11:45am, Fall session 2.

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

Typical class structure:

- Each class, we'll discuss in depth one or two papers. For each paper, either me or a student 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

- 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.

Tentative overview of topics

1. Models of education decisions, skill formation, and identification of the returns to education

- P. Arcidiacono (2004). Ability sorting and the returns to college majors. *Journal of Econometrics*, 121(1–2): 343–75.
- P. Arcidiacono (2005). Affirmative action in higher education: How do admission and financial aid rules affect future earnings? *Econometrica*, 73(5): 1477–524.
- 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, S. Schennach (2010). Estimating the technology of cognitive and noncognitive skill formation. *Econometrica*, 78(3): 883–931.
- P. Carneiro, J. Heckman, E. Vytlačil (2011). Estimating marginal returns to education. *American Economic Review*, 101(6): 2754–81.
- L. Kirkeboen, E. Leuven, M. Mogstad (2016). Field of study, earnings, and self-selection. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 131(2): 1057–112.

2. School choice and mechanism design

- N. Agarwal, P. Somaini (2018). Demand analysis using strategic reports: An application to a school choice mechanism. *Econometrica*, 86(2): 391–444.
- M. Lufade (2018). The value of information in centralized school choice systems. *Working paper*.
- T. Larroucau, I. Ríos (2021). Dynamic college admissions and the determinants of students' college retention. *Working paper*.
- A. Abdulkadiroğlu, T. Sönmez (2003). School choice: a mechanism design approach. *American Economic Review*, 93(3): 729–47.
- 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.

3. 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.
- T. Nechyba (2000). Mobility, targeting, and private-school vouchers. *American Economic Review*, 90(1): 120–146.
- D. Epple, R. Romano (2003). Neighborhood schools, choice, and the distribution of educational benefits. In Caroline M. Hoxby, ed., *The Economics of school choice*. University of Chicago Press, p.227–286.
- F. Agostinelli, M. Lufade, P. Martellini (2021). On the spatial determinants of educational access. *Working paper*.

4. 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.
- M. Dinerstein and T. Smith (2021). Quantifying the supply response of private schools to public policies. *American Economic Review*, forthcoming.
- J. Singleton (2019). Incentives and the supply of effective charter schools. *American Economic Review*, 109(7): 2568–612.
- C. Allende (2020). Targeted vouchers, competition among schools, and the academic achievement of poor students. *Working paper*.

5. Educational inputs —teachers, peers, school quality

- C. Manski (1993). Identification of endogenous social effects: The reflection problem. *Review of Economic Studies*, 60(3): 531–42.
- C. Hoxby, G. Weingarth (2006). Taking race out of the equation. The structure of peer effects. *Working paper, Harvard University*.
- A. Abdulkadiroğlu, P. Pathak, N. Schellenberg, C. Walters (2020). Do parents value school effectiveness? *American Economic Review*, 110(5): 1502–39.

- B. Biasi, C. Fu, J. Stromme (2021). Equilibrium in the Market for Public School Teachers: District Wage Strategies and Teacher Comparative Advantage. *Working paper*.
- J. Rothstein (2015). Teacher Quality Policy When Supply Matters. *American Economic Review*, 105(1): 100–30.