Syllabus

Features of this course

This course is the continuation of the 219A class in *Psychology and Economics – Theory*, taught by Matthew Rabin. As in 219A, we will keep emphasizing the psychological evidence as the basis for sound economic analysis. This should surprise nobody, given the name by which the course (and the field) goes. We will also insist on the importance of neoclassical theory as a very successful benchmark that you are required to know. Finally, several topics of this course are designed to be the empirical counterpart of the theory covered in 219A. This is in particular true for the sections on Self Control, Reference Dependent Preferences, and Social Preferences.

There are two main differences between 219A and 219B. First, this class has largely an empirical orientation, as opposed to the theoretical orientation of 219B. The emphasis on data just reflects the empirical status of economics. In particular, the success of the Psychology and Economics approach will depend on the empirical explanatory power of its theories. Can this approach explain evidence that the neoclassical model struggles with? Can it do so using parsimonious models? In 219B I will present empirical papers drawn from a variety of fields to try to address these questions. We will touch on consumption, public economics, labor economics, industrial organization, political economy, asset pricing, and corporate finance.

The second main feature of the course will be its emphasis on dissertation writing. This will be apparent in the exposition of the topics. More often than not, we will note that the available empirical evidence barely scratches the surface. While this is a drawback for the field, it is a great opportunity for students planning to work in the area. In very few other fields there are so many important questions that still go unanswered. Throughout the course I will do my best to point out what seem to me like good directions for empirical research. In addition, as an incentive to get you started, one of the requirements of the course is a paper on an applied topic. More on this below.
Rules of the game

As a general rule, you should have taken the 219A course before you take this course. If you have not, but are interested in taking this course, please come and talk to me. The prerequisites of the 219A course, that is, an understanding of the economics of uncertainty, contract theory, and game theory at the level of 201B, apply to this course as well. In addition, it is important that you have had exposure to econometrics and empirical research. You should be familiar with OLS estimation, panel data models, and discrete choice models. For example, you should have no uncertainty as to what fixed effects do in a regression. Although it is not a requirement for this course, I recommend taking at least one labor (or empirical io) course to anyone contemplating doing empirical research.

Throughout the course, I will assign a few required readings each week. The required readings are starred in the reading list below. The non-starred readings are optional, but I suggest that you at least read the abstract. So much of a paper is in the abstract (if the abstract is well-written)!

There are three requirements for the course: weekly assignments, a presentation, and a paper. The assignments are as follows. Every week I will assign a conference-style discussion of one of the required readings. The discussion is only due on eight of the thirteen weeks of the course, at your choice. In the discussion you should focus your attention on the content, the empirical strategy, or possible extensions of the paper. You do not need to summarize the paper. Given the high frequency of the assignment, the format requirements will be minimal. The discussion should be one- to two-pages long, and can be in a bullet format. The discussion is due to me by noon on Tuesday before lecture. This way I can read them before class and try to integrate your comments in the lecture. You can either slide the discussion under my door or email it to me. (if you are indifferent, the ‘door method’ is faster for me, thanks!).

The other assignment is a one-time empirical problem set. This year, the problem set will focus on earning announcements and the response of stock prices to the new information contained in the announcements. You can work on the assignment in groups of up to three people, but each one should hand in a solution. I will distribute the problem set at the beginning of March. The data will be in Stata format. I will assume that you have a working knowledge of Stata.

The second requirement is a 25-minute class presentation of the weekly reading. The presentation should have three parts: a. summary of the content of the paper; b. criticism of the paper; c. suggestions for new research. I will elicit your preferences on the topic for the presentation. These short presentations are a good practice for many to come in your academic career.

The third requirement for the course is an empirical paper. As a student, I hated courses that required a paper, but was very happy ex post that I had been forced to write one. As an attempt to make this commitment device more palatable, here are two technological innovations:

- The paper can be written in groups of up to 3 students.
- I encourage you to come up with your own topic for the paper. However, if you prefer more guidance, I have a few suggested paper topics that I can assign.

As for the timing, each person/group should come to see me by February 18. You should feel free to either come during office hours or to schedule an appointment via email. A two-page written proposal is due by March 17. The final 10-15 page paper is due on May 14. The ideal paper contains a novel idea, the empirical strategy, and preliminary empirical results. However, I will accept significantly less as long as you show significant effort.
A natural presentation outlet for these papers is the Psychology and Economics Lunch, that will start meeting from mid February. You are strongly encouraged to attend this lunch if you are interested in making Psychology and Economics one of your fields. In addition, you should attend the Psychology and Economics Seminar (Tu 2-4) as much as you can. Spots to go for lunch with the speaker are available for sign-up.

The good news is, there is no exam for this course!

The course webpage is an important instrument for this course (http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/webfac/dellavigna/e219b_sp04/e219b.shtml). On the website you will find updated lists of readings, the assignments, and the revised lecture notes in pdf format.

After class, I invite you to join me for a coffee at 3pm to chat about Berkeley, Psychology and Economics, Saddam, Chicago economics, or any other favorite topic of yours.
Grading

The written discussions will be graded on a scale from 0 to 5 (excellent). The final grade will be an average of your best 5 discussions. You therefore have a bonus of three discussions which will not be counted. The class presentation and the paper are also graded on a scale from 0 to 5.

The final grade will be an average with weight 30% on the written discussions, 15% on the problem set, 15% on the class presentation, and 40% on the paper.

Tentative schedule of classes

The schedule will vary somewhat as the class unfolds. The syllabus will be updated on the web and will be available on the course webpage at http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/webfac/dellavigna/e219b_sp04/e219b.shtml. (the course webpage)

January 21 – Lecture 1
   Introduction
   Good and Bad Psychology and Economics
   Present-Biased Preferences, Part 1

January 28 – Lecture 2
   Present-Biased Preferences, Part 2

February 4 – Lecture 3
   Present-Biased Preferences, Part 3

February 11 – Lecture 4
   Present-Biased Preferences, Part 4
   Reference Dependence, Part 1

February 18 – Lecture 5
   Reference Dependence, Part 2
   Effect of Experience

February 25 – Lecture 6
   Reference Dependence, Part 3
   Framing and Narrow Framing, Part 1

March 3 – Lecture 7
   Framing and Narrow Framing, Part 2

March 10 – Lecture 8
   Financial Data Sets
   Introduction to Corporate Finance
   Empirical Problem Set Handed Out (Earnings Announcement)

March 17 – Lecture 9
Earning Announcements
Introduction to Behavioral Finance

March 24 – Spring Break – No Lecture

March 31 – Lecture 10
  Attention, Part 1
  Guest Lecture (Josh Pollet)

April 7 – Lecture 11
  Market Reaction to Biases, Part 1

April 14 – Lecture 12
  Attention, Part 2
  Guest Lecture (Terry Odean)
  Market Reaction to Biases, Part 2
  Economics of Media, Part 1

April 21 – Lecture 13
  Economics of Media, Part 2
  Persuasion and Social Learning, Part 1

April 28 – Lecture 14
  Persuasion and Social Learning, Part 2
  Overconfidence

May 5 – Lecture 15
  Social Preferences
  Choosing Topics for Dissertation
  Conclusion
Readings

*designates required readings.

Some of the readings will be taken from the textbook used in the previous semester of 203, that is, from Choice, Values and Frames:
*Kahneman and Tversky Choices, values and frames, (henceforth CVF).

For those of you who are looking for a background book in social psychology to complement the content of the Psychology and Economics sequence, I recommend:

Introduction


1. Present-Biased Preferences

Theory overview

http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~rabin/retire.pdf

Status-Quo Bias in Financial Decisions

http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=6&tid=7463

Consumer Behavior

Wertenbroch, Klaus, “Consumption Self-Control by Rationing Purchase Quantities of Virtue and Vice,” Marketing Science, 17 (4), 317-337


Miravete, Eugenio and Palacios-Huerta, Ignacio “Learning Time Preferences”

Payday effect

Barenstein and Huffman “Beer, Steak and Whisky: Evidence of a Payday Spending-Spree”


Labor Economics

**Public Economics**


[http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/botond/addiction.pdf](http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/botond/addiction.pdf)


**Life-Cycle Consumption**


[http://post.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/laibson/papers.html](http://post.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/laibson/papers.html)

**Mixed Readings**


**2. Reference Dependence**

*Labor supply*  


Goette, Lorenz and Huffman, David “Reference-Dependent Preferences and the Allocation of Effort Over Time”, 2004.

*Market experience


*Markets
http://finance.wharton.upenn.edu/~maverc

Camerer, Colin. “Prospect theory in the wild: Evidence from the field” CVF 16


*Asset Pricing


3. Framing and Narrow Framing

Constructions Preferences

Loewenstein, George and Simonsohn, Uri. "Mistake #37: The Effect of Previously Faced Prices on Current Housing Demand". http://www.mit.edu/~uws/housing121802.pdf

Menu effects

Framing / Anchoring


Ashenfelter and Greenstone

Flypaper effect...

Risk Aversion

Bargaining


4. Behavioral Finance
Overview
*Barberis, Nick and Thaler, Richard. “A Survey of Behavioral Finance”

Noise traders


Earning announcements

Event Studies


5. Attention

Theory and Experiments


Financial Markets


Rewarding for Luck

Justin Wolfers, Are Voters Rational? Evidence from Gubernatorial Elections, Stanford GSB.

Labor Supply

6. Market Reaction to Individual Biases

Do biases matter?
Becker, 1962


Experienced and Inexperienced Agents

Pricing
http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/sdellavi/wp/self_control_dec03.pdf


Corporate Decisions


Employers

Betting

Politicians

Welfare Maximization

7. Economics of the Media

Media Coverage and Government Behavior

Media Bias


Media Coverage and Reader Behavior

Matt Gentzkow

*A Measure of Media Bias


8. Persuasion and Social Learning

Model

DeMarzo, Peter, Vayanos, Dimitry, and Zwiebel, Jeff. “Persuasion Bias, Social Influence, and Uni-Dimensional Opinions”, July 2002
http://web.mit.edu/dimitriv/www/PERSU.pdf

Implicit Persuasion

Huberman, Gur.

http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=6&tid=7463

*Duflo, Esther and Saez, Emmanuel, "The Role of Information and Social Interactions in Retirement Plan Decisions: Evidence From a Randomized Experiment", Forthcoming, QJE

Social Learning (not covered this year – see David Card’s Labor Economics class)
Bruce Sacerdote, “Peer effects with random assignment: Results for Dartmouth roommates”, Quarterly Journal of Economics, May 2001


Social Pressure
*Luis Garicano, Ignacio Palacios-Huerta, and Canice Prendergast, "Favoritism Under Social Pressure"

Bernardo A. Huberman, Christoph H. Loch, and Ayse Önçüler “Status as a Valued Resource”, mimeo.

Armin Falk, Andrea Ichino, "Clean Evidence on Peer Pressure"

9. Overconfidence

Entrepreneurs
CVF 23

Investors

http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/odean/papers/overconf/DoInvestors.pdf

Managers


10. Social Preferences


Charitable donations


new Falk

Additional Topics

Neuroeconomics


Bernheim, Douglas; Rangel, Antonio