

ECON6202

Policy Evaluation Methods

Course Outline

Semester 2, 2017

Course-Specific Information

The Business School expects that you are familiar with the contents of this course outline. You must also be familiar with the Course Outlines Policies webpage which contains key information on:

- Program Learning Goals and Outcomes
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Student Responsibilities and Conduct
- Special Consideration
- Student Support and Resources

This webpage can be found on the Business School website:

<https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/degrees-courses/course-outlines/policies>

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1 STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Lecturer-in-charge: Professor Denise Doiron (weeks 1-6)

Location: Room 468 UNSW Business School

Phone: 9385 3734

Email: d.doiron@unsw.edu.au

Consultation Times: Wednesday 1.00 - 3.00PM

Lecturer-in-charge: Professor Pauline Grosjean (weeks 7-12)

Location: Room 442 UNSW Business School

Phone: 9385 7482

Email: p.grosjean@unsw.edu.au

Consultation Times: Monday 2.30 - 4.30PM

1.1 Communications with staff

The lecturers are responsible for the course content as well as the overall administration of the course. You should feel free to approach them about any academic matter related to the course. However, for efficiency reasons, all enquiries about the subject material should be made during consultation time or at lectures or tutorials. Discussion of course subject material will not be entered into via email.

Email correspondence on administrative matters (e.g. advising inability to attend tut) will be responded to within 48 hours, but not over weekends.

2 COURSE DETAILS

2.1 Teaching Times and Locations

Each student should enrol in the lecture and the tutorial. The combined lecture/tutorial meets on Mondays 11am – 2pm in Business School G26. Lectures will run from week 1 to week 12 inclusively. A meeting may be held on week 13 to make up for cancelled classes due to illness or public holidays for example.

2.2 Units of Credit

The course is worth 6 units of credit. This course is taught in parallel to both Honours and postgraduate students.

2.3 Summary of Course

The objective of the course is for students to learn a set of statistical tools and research designs that are useful in conducting high-quality empirical research on topics in applied microeconomics and related fields. Since most applied economic research examines questions with direct policy implications, this course will focus on methods for estimating causal effects of various types of interventions.

We will critically discuss various techniques and indicate strengths and weaknesses. Different types of data will be discussed along with the tools appropriate for the various forms of data. This course differs from many other econometrics courses in that it is oriented towards applied practitioners rather than future econometricians. It therefore emphasizes research design (relative to statistical technique) and applications (relative to theoretical proofs), although it covers some of each.

During the course, we will review several different approaches to program evaluation and apply these methods to real data. We will examine applications in a broad range of areas including development, labour markets, health care, political economy, social welfare and poverty, education, and crime.

2.4 Aims and Relationship to Other Courses

The course aims to endow students with tools relevant in evaluating programs, and to train students' skills in conducting economic research. ECON 4106/6202 is an option available for students enrolled in an Honours or Post-graduate program in economics or commerce. The course relies considerably on methods of data analysis; tools learned in an intermediate econometrics course such as ECON2206 are assumed knowledge in the course. The subject is suitable both for those students interested in evaluation techniques for any type of program or policy to students interested in the conduct of applied microeconomic work generally.

2.5 Student Learning Outcomes

The Course Learning Outcomes are what you should be able to DO by the end of this course if you participate fully in learning activities and successfully complete the assessment items.

The Learning Outcomes in this course also help you to achieve some of the overall Program Learning Goals and Outcomes for all students in the BUSINESS SCHOOL. Program Learning Goals are what we want you to BE or HAVE by the time you successfully complete your degree. You demonstrate this by achieving specific Program Learning Outcomes - what you are able to DO by the end of your degree.

For more information on Program Learning Goals and Outcomes, see the School's Course Outlines Policies webpage available at <https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/degrees-courses/course-outlines/policies>.

The following table shows how your Course Learning Outcomes relate to the overall Program Learning Goals and Outcomes, and indicates where these are assessed:

Program Learning Goals and Outcomes		Course Learning Outcomes	Course Assessment Item
<i>This course helps you to achieve the following learning goals</i>		<i>On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:</i>	<i>This learning outcome will be assessed in the following items:</i>
1	Knowledge	Have an in-depth understanding of econometric/experimental tools to evaluate economically relevant policies. Know how to choose, defend and apply the appropriate estimation model(s) to the estimation of treatment effects taking into account the structure of the data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral presentation • Participation in group discussions • Problem sets

2	Critical thinking and problem solving	<p>Be able to critically evaluate experimental designs and program evaluations.</p> <p>Know how to analyse the data collected from the field or created in an experiment, and to derive conclusions.</p> <p>Know how to choose, defend and apply the appropriate estimation model(s) to the estimation of treatment effects taking into account the structure of the data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral presentation • Participation in group discussions • Problem sets
3a	Written communication	<p>Critically evaluate experimental designs and program evaluations.</p> <p>Analyse the data collected from the field or created in an experiment, and to derive conclusions</p> <p>Be able to present and discuss your findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem sets
3b	Oral communication	<p>Choose, defend and apply the appropriate estimation model(s) to the estimation of treatment effects taking into account the structure of the data,</p> <p>Be able to present and discuss your findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral presentation • Participation in group discussions
4	Teamwork	Work collaboratively to complete a task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral presentation • Participation in group discussions
5a.	Ethical, environmental and sustainability considerations	Not specifically addressed in this course.	
5b.	Social and cultural awareness	Have an in-depth understanding of econometric/experimental tools to evaluate economically relevant policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral presentation • Participation in group discussions • Problem sets

3 LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

3.1 Approach to Learning and Teaching in the Course

The philosophy underpinning this course and its Teaching and Learning Strategies are based on “Guidelines on Learning that Inform Teaching at UNSW. These guidelines may be viewed at: www.guidelinesonlearning.unsw.edu.au. Specifically, the lectures, tutorials and assessment have been designed to appropriately challenge students and support the achievement of the desired learning outcomes. A climate of inquiry and dialogue is encouraged between students and teachers and among students (in and out of class). The lecturers aim to provide meaningful and timely feedback to students to improve learning outcome.

Quantitative information and statistics are pervasive not only in the study of economics and business but in understanding a wide range of phenomena. Every attempt will be made to demonstrate the relevance of the course to understanding such phenomena.

General principles or guidelines for undertaking applied work are discussed. In particular, we stress careful data analysis, the need to evaluate estimated models and the importance of the links between econometric models and the underlying substantive knowledge or theory associated with the particular application. These issues will be related to applications drawn from various fields.

3.2 Learning Activities and Teaching Strategies

There will be five basic learning activities utilised in this course: studying of lecture material, reading of additional material, presentation of relevant material, discussion of issues, and writing.

In the lectures, the lecturer will give an **overview** of the specific meeting topic, emphasise the challenges faced in research and practise, introduce state-of-the-art research tools to tackle the problems, discuss relevant background literature, and point to open research questions.

Students are expected to prepare the class by **reading** the assigned literature for the meeting. Open questions or difficulties in understanding should be brought to the attention of the class so that they can be discussed and resolved.

In each tutorial, students will discuss questions in teams and make **presentations**. Presenting in class improves your organizational and communication skills. Each week, a paper illustrating the lecture material covered in that week will be assigned for the following week's tutorial. At the beginning of the tutorial, a different question relating to the pre-assigned paper will be given to each team. The teams will discuss this question for the first half of the tutorial and will present a brief summary of these deliberations during the last half of the tutorial. The presentations will be 5 to 10 minutes for each team depending on the number of teams. The number of students in each team and the number of teams will depend on the size of the class.

During and after presentations and lectures, all students in class are expected to actively **discuss** the material being presented and the relevant open questions.

4 ASSESSMENT

4.0 You must complete the “Working with Academic Integrity” module on your Moodle site, before you hand in any written work.

- You **MUST** complete the ‘Working with Academic Integrity’ module **AND THE MODULE’S QUIZ**, found on your course Moodle site, **BEFORE YOU ARE ALLOWED TO SUBMIT ANY WRITTEN ASSESSMENT**.
- If your submission is delayed because you did not complete the module and the quiz, you may be liable to late penalties as specified in your course outline.
- Failing to comply with the University rules of Academic integrity may result in serious consequences:
 - All cases of plagiarism (regardless of their severity) **ARE** recorded with the University Integrity Office University register.

- Depending on the level of the plagiarism/misconduct, the penalties may include a FAIL grade for the assessment piece, a FAIL grade for the course, or being expelled for serious/repeat offences.

Any misconduct, including plagiarism, is recorded on your Conduct Record. If you have only one academic misconduct at the lowest level (level A) in your career, then the record is wiped clear when you graduate. Otherwise it remains there permanently. *Many professions, such as accounting and law, require access to the student's Conduct Record.*

4.1 Formal Requirements

In order to pass this course, you must:

- achieve a composite mark of at least 50 out of 100; and
- make a satisfactory attempt at ALL assessment tasks.

Assessment Details

Assessment Task	Weight	Length	Due date
1. Oral presentations	15%	20 minutes total	See 4.2 below
2. Participation in group discussions	5%	See 4.2 below	See 4.2 below
3. Problem Sets (4, 20% each)	80%	See 4.3 below	Weeks 5, 8, 12, 13

4.2 Oral presentations and participation in group discussions

Each week students will be asked to discuss and present answers to questions based on a pre-assigned paper. This paper will illustrate some of the material covered in the lecture in the previous week and will normally be chosen from the list in Section 7. Students will work in teams to discuss the question(s) in the first half of the tutorial and to present answers to the class in the second half of the tutorial. The lecturer will circulate among the groups to facilitate the discussions. All students must participate in the discussions and in the presentations.

Students should come to tutorials prepared to participate in the team discussions and the class discussions; i.e. they are expected to review the material covered in the previous week, read the pre-assigned paper in advance, participate in discussions, and contribute to the presentation of the team's answer to the rest of the class. Marking is done continuously based on participation in discussions, the content and style of presentations.

4.3 Problem Sets

A major component of the course assessment will be **problem sets**. Four problem sets will be assigned two weeks before they are due and must be turned in the day they are due, at the beginning of class. Problems sets will be given out in Weeks 3, 6, 9 and 11 (due in weeks 5, 8, 11 and 13, respectively). Data will be provided for the problem sets and you will have to run some analysis using the techniques seen in class. You will have to turn in your programming (do-files if you are using *stata*) and your answers to questions on separate sheets. Each problem set will take a long time to prepare. Hence, you should not leave it to the last minute, or you will be unable to complete it. Students may work together on the project and teams of up to a **maximum of 3 students** can

submit a joint project. There are no requirements for students to present joint projects and students may choose to submit individual problem sets.

4.4 Quality Assurance

The Business School is actively monitoring student learning and quality of the student experience in all its programs. A random selection of completed assessment tasks may be used for quality assurance, such as to determine the extent to which program learning goals are being achieved. The information is required for accreditation purposes, and aggregated findings will be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of Business School programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential and will not be related to course grades.

5 COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the School and continual improvements are made based on this feedback. UNSW's myExperience Survey Tool is one of the ways in which student evaluative feedback is gathered. You are strongly encouraged to take part in the feedback process.

6 COURSE RESOURCES

The website for this course is on UNSW Moodle at: <http://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au>

The website contains: the course outline; the tutorial documents; the lecture notes; data used in the tutorial problems and problem sets; course announcements; and other course hand-outs.

Students should consult this website at least once a week as it contains important information about the course. It will be assumed that all students have seen any notice posted on the course website.

The textbook for the course is:

Angrist, J.D. and J.S. Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

A copy of this text has been placed on reserve at the library and copies are available at the bookstore.

Material from the textbook will be complemented with journal articles that can be downloaded from the respective journal websites through UNSW's library system.

For background knowledge in intermediate econometrics, it is recommended that you consult either:

- [CT] Cameron, A. Colin and Pravin Trivedi (2005). *Microeconometrics: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press.
- [JW] Wooldridge, Jeffrey (2002). *Econometric Analysis of Cross Section and Panel Data*. MIT Press.

Both texts will be available in the Open Reserve Section of the library. Also they will be available for purchase from the bookstore.

Computing work

Computing is an important component of policy evaluation. The problem sets will require the use of econometric software. The econometric software used by the lecturers for this course is Stata. Stata is available in the Business School computing labs; alternatively, the class is enrolled in a trial of remote software access for students at: <https://www.myaccess.unsw.edu.au/>; or you can obtain a copy of the Stata and install it on your own PC. To purchase your own copy, you will need to fill out a form and to pay the price of the version of Stata you choose to buy. For more information on Stata prices in Australia, see: <http://www.survey-design.com.au/gradplan.html>

There are lots of resources and support for Stata on the web. Particularly useful are the following websites:

- For general help, browse through: <http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/>
- You can work through a tutorial at: <http://data.princeton.edu/stata/>
- <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/mcmahonm/Stata.htm>, specifically class 3, 4 and 5.

The manual: A.C. Acock, "A Gentle Introduction to Stata", 2nd edition, Stata Press, 2008 may be helpful and is available on open reserve at the library.

Note that students do not need to buy their own copy of Stata and can choose to conduct their computing work on campus in the computer labs. Also, it is possible to complete the course using alternative software such as SAS, E-Views, or R. However, EXCEL will not be sufficient. Solutions to problem sets will be provided in stata only.

7 COURSE SCHEDULE

In what follows, MHE indicates the "Mostly Harmless Econometrics" text mentioned above. CT refers to the Cameron and Trivedi book and JW the Wooldridge book both references also given above. Required readings from the texts are indicated for each topic and additional readings are suggested in bullet points. Required readings for discussion in tutorials are also indicated but may change during the course. Additional readings may be assigned during the semester.

1. Introduction, Definitions, Setting up the Evaluation problem, Causality and Manipulation (Week 1)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 0, available on UNSW Moodle

For tutorial week 2 (Note there are two readings for the tutorial in week 2 since they are survey/discussion type papers):

- Ravallion, M. (1999), "Ms. Speedy Analyst's Introduction to Evaluation", World Bank Policy Research WP 2153.
- Banerjee A.V. and E. Duflo (2008) "The Experimental Approach to Development Economics," NBER Working Papers 14467, 41 pgs. (also published as: Abhijit V. Banerjee & Esther Duflo, 2009. "The Experimental Approach to Development Economics," *Annual Review of Economics, Annual Reviews*, vol. 1(1), pages 151-178, 05.)

Additional readings:

- Blundell, R. and M. Costas Dias (2000), "Evaluation Methods for Non experimental Data", *Fiscal Studies*, 21(4) pp. 427-468.
- Athey, S. and G.W. Imbens (2017), "The State of Applied Econometrics: Causality and Policy Evaluation", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2) pp.3-32.

2. Randomized Designs, Tests, Regressions, Role of Covariates (Week 2)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 1, available on UNSW Moodle
- MHE: Chapters 1 and 2

For tutorial week 3:

- Miguel, T. and M. Kremer (2004). "Worms: identifying Impacts on Education and Health in the Presence of Treatment Externalities", *Econometrica*, 72(1), pp. 159-217.

Additional readings:

- Holland, P. (1986) "Statistics and Causal Inference." *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 81, pp. 945–960.
- Rubin, D. (1986) "Statistics and Causal Inference: Comment: Which Ifs Have Causal Answers?" *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 81, pp. 961–962.
- Banerjee, A.V., E. Duflo, S. Cole and L. Linden (2007). "Remedying Education: Evidence from two randomized experiments in India", *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122(3), pp. 1235-1264.
- Dupas, P. and J. Robinson. 2013. "Why Don't the Poor Save More? Evidence from Health Savings Experiments", *American Economic Review* 103(4), pp. 1138-71.

3. Imperfect Random Assignment, Strong Ignorability, Selection on observables, Matching, Matching vs Regression (Weeks 3 and 4)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 2, available on UNSW Moodle
- MHE: Chapter 3

Background readings:

- CT Chapter 4.1 - 4.5, 9, 24, 25.4,
- JW Chapter 4, 18.3.1, 18.3.2

For tutorial week 4:

- Arceneaux, K., A. Gerber, and D. Green (2006). "Comparing Experimental and Matching Methods Using a Large-Scale Voter Mobilization Experiment", *Political Analysis* 14, 37–62

For tutorial week 5:

- Black, D.A. and J.A. Smith (2004), "How Robust is the Evidence on the Effects of College Quality? Evidence from Matching," *Journal of Econometrics*, 121, 99-124.

Additional readings:

- Anderson, Michael. (2008) "Multiple Inference and Gender Differences in the Effects of Early Intervention: A Reevaluation of the Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, and Early

Training Projects”, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*. 103(484), pp. 1481-1495.

- Blundell, Richard and Alan Duncan. “Kernel Regression in Empirical Microeconomics.” *The Journal of Human Resources*, 1998, 33, 62-87.
- Robert J. LaLonde, 1986, “Evaluating the Econometric Evaluations of Training Programs with Experimental Data”, *American Economic Review* 76, 604-20.
- Dehejia, R. and S. Wahba (2002), “Propensity Score-Matching Methods for Nonexperimental Causal Studies,” *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 84(1), 151-161.

⇒ **PROBLEM SET 1 (Week 3 due Week 5)**

4. Violations of SI, OVB, Selection on Unobservables Design: Differencing type estimators, Synthetic Cohorts (Weeks 5 and 6)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 3, available on UNSW Moodle
- MHE: Chapter 5, 8

Background readings:

- CT Chapter 21, 22, 25.5
- JW Chapter 10.

For tutorial week 6:

- Bertrand, M., E. Luttmer and S. Mullanaithan (2000) Network Effects and Welfare Cultures. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115 (3), pp. 1019-1055

For tutorial week 7:

- Card, D. and A. Krueger. (1994) “Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.” *American Economic Review*, 84, pp. 487–496

Additional readings:

- Ashenfelter, O. and D. Card (1985) “Using the Longitudinal Structure of Earnings to Estimate the Effect of Training Programs”, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 67(4), pp.648-660.
- Bertrand, M., E. Duflo and S. Mullanaithan (2004). “How much should we trust differences in differences Estimates?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 119(1), pp. 249-275.
- Altonji, J.G., T.E. Elder and C.R. Taber (2005) “Selection on Observed and Unobserved Variables: Assessing the Effectiveness of Catholic Schools”, *Journal of Political Economy* 113(1), pp. 151-184
- Abadie, A. and J. Gardeazabal (2003) The Economic Costs of Conflict: A Case Study of the Basque Country. *American Economic Review*. vol. 93, no. 1 pp. 113-132

⇒ **PROBLEM SET 2 (Week 6 due Week 8)**

Note: The tutorial readings for the second half of the course will be assigned after the start of the course.

5. Instrumental Variables methodology (Weeks 7 and 8)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 4, available on UNSW Moodle
- MHE: Chapter 4

5.1 The IV estimator

CT Chapter 4.8.

JW Chapter 5.

- *Angrist, J. (1990) Lifetime Earnings and The Vietnam Era Draft Lottery: Evidence from Social Security Administrative Records. *American Economic Review* 80.

5.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

CT Chapter 25.7.

WNE Lecture 5.

JW Chapter 18.4.

- Angrist, J, G. Imbens, and D. Rubin (1996) "Identification of Causal Effects Using Instrumental Variables." *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 1996, 91, 444–455.

5.3 2SLS and Weak Instruments

CT Chapter 4.9.

WNE Lecture 13.

- *Angrist, J. and A. (1991) Krueger. "Does Compulsory School Attendance Affect Schooling and Earnings?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 106, 979–1014.

5.4 Control function approach

Week 9: More on Experiments: Randomized, Natural, Historical

- Deaton A. (2009) "Instruments of development: randomization in the tropics, and the search for the elusive keys to economic development", NBER working paper 14690
- Imbens, G.W. (2009) "Better late than nothing: some comments on Deaton (2009) and Heckman and Urzua (2009)" NBER Working paper 14896
- Rosenzweig M. and K. Wolpin (2000), "Natural "Natural Experiments" in Economics", *Journal of Economic Literature*, 38(4) 827-874.
- Meyer, B. (1995), "Natural and Quasi-Experiments in Economics," *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics*, 13, 151-161.
- Bronars S.G. and J. Grogger (1994) "The Economic Consequences of Unwed Motherhood: Using Twin Births as a Natural Experiment," *American Economic Review*, 84, pp. 1141-56.
- *Michalopolous, S. and E. Papaioannou (2013) Pre-colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary African Development *Econometrica*, Vol. 81(1): 113–152
- *Fuchs-Schundeln, N. and T. Hassan. (2015) Natural Experiments in Macroeconomics. NBER working paper 21228

⇒ **PROBLEM SET 3 (Week 9)**

6. Regression Discontinuity Design and Regression Kink Design (Weeks 10 and 11)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 5, available on UNSW Moodle
- MHE: Chapter 6

CT Chapter 25.6

- Campbell (1969) Reforms as Experiments. *American Psychologist*
- Imbens, G. and T. Lemieux (2008) "Regression Discontinuity Designs: A Guide to Practice." *Journal of Econometrics*, 142, 615-635.
- McCrary, J. (2008). "Manipulation of the Running Variable In the Regression Discontinuity Design: A Density Test." *Journal of Econometrics* 142,698-714.
- *Moretti, E., D. Lee and M. Butler (2004) Do Voters Affect or Elect Policies? Evidence from the U.S. House. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119(3), 2004
- Gelber, A., T. Moore, and A. Strand (2015) The Effect of Disability Insurance Income on Beneficiaries' Earnings. working paper GWU
- Dell, M. and P. Querubin (2016). Bombing the way to state building? Lessons from the Vietnam War. Working paper, Harvard University

⇒ **PROBLEM SET 4 (Week 11)**

7. Event studies and Prediction-Market Event Studies (Week 12)

Required readings:

- Lecture notes 7, available on UNSW Moodle

- MacKinlay, A. C. (1997) Event Studies in Economics and Finance. *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 13–39
- *Fisman, Raymond (2001) Estimating the Value of Political Connections. *American Economic Review* Vol. 91, 4: 1095–1102.
- *Acemoglu, D., T. Hassan and A. Tahoun (2014) The Power of the Street: Evidence from Egypt's Arab Spring, NBER Working paper Nb. 20665
- Sangnier, M. and R. Coulomb. 2014. The impact of political majorities on firm value: Do electoral promises or friendship connections matter? *Journal of Public Economics*, Vol. 115, pp. 158-170, 2014.
- Durante, Ruben and Zhuravskaya, Ekaterina (2016) Attack When the World Is Not Watching? U.S. News and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2566741> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2566741>