

Preliminary Syllabus [subject to revision]

Econ 281: Recent Research on Anti-Poverty Programs

Winter 2021, TTh 3:30 PM-4:50 PM

UCSD Economics Department

Assistant Professor Katherine Meckel

This class is meant to complement the other public economics courses offered in the second year graduate sequence. Rather than taking a broad view of the literature and theoretical concepts, we will take a deep dive into two current papers per week.

You should be prepared in class to give a brief answer to the following questions for each assigned paper if called on:

- (a) What is the main question?
- (b) What is the author(s)'s contribution to this question?
- (c) Describe the setting the authors investigate.
- (d) What are the primary sources of data?
- (e) What is the method used to address the main question.
- (f) What evidence is presented in the paper?
- (g) What do the author(s) conclude from this evidence?

In addition, students are required to email me two questions per week, 1 by Monday night (defined as 9 PM PT) on the paper assigned for Tuesday, and 1 by Wednesday night for the paper assigned for Thursday. If there are two papers due on a particular day, you only need to email me a question for one of them. Questions may concern any part of the paper, including the motivation, theoretical concepts, identification strategy, empirical methods, interpretation and conclusions, etc. A question like “why didn’t the authors use the information on benefit packages available in their data, given that benefits are a dimension of compensation?” is better than a question like “what data did the authors use”? No questions are due for week 1.

Class participation, consisting of (1) in-class discussions of the papers and (2) your submitted questions will count for 40% of the grade.

The other 60% of the grade is allotted based on a 5-10 page paper proposal due during finals week. We will lay out more details about the proposals in class.

Week 1:

Introduction and Background on US Transfer Programs

Reading:

Due Monday: Currie (2004): <https://www.nber.org/papers/w10488>

Due Wednesday: Currie and Gahvari (2008): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27646992>

Hoynes and Schanzenbach (2015): <https://www.nber.org/papers/w21057>

[NO QUESTIONS DUE THIS WEEK]

Week 2:

Topic: Ordeals/Targeting

Tuesday: Finkelstein/Notowidigdo: [Take-up and Targeting- Experimental Evidence from SNAP](#) August 2019 *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134(3):1505–1556 (with Matthew J. Notowidigdo). Click [here](#) for Appendices

Thursday: Deshpande and Li, AEJ, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20180076>

Note: Find ungated paper on Manasi Deshpande's website

Week 3:

Topic: Marginal Propensity to Consume out of Benefits

Tuesday Shapiro and Hastings (2018, AER):

<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20170866>

Note: Free access to published version on the authors' websites

Homonoff and Somerville (AEJ Policy)

This version: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w27311>

Week 4: Labor Supply

Hoynes and Bitler (AER): <https://gspp.berkeley.edu/research/selected-publications/what-mean-impacts-miss-distributional-effects-of-welfare-reform-experiments>

New Adam Leive et al. paper on SNAP and labor supply?, TBA

New Kleven paper on EITC?, TBA

Week 5: Measuring Welfare Effects

Hendren, 2018, 2019 (and summary by Finkelstein)

Week 6: Interaction with Private Firms

My JMP (and AER revision process)

If time, my working on SNAP and pricing

Week 7: Long Term Outcomes, Part 1

TBA

Week 8: Long Term Outcomes, Part 2

TBA

Week 9: TBA

Week 10: Student-Nominated Papers