

Graduate Connection

Vol. 30 No. 2

December 2024

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News

Happy Holidays!

The faculty and staff extend their best wishes for a happy holiday season. The University is officially closed from the end of business on Thursday December 23 and reopens on the morning of Thursday January 2. During the closure period your Wildcard is needed to access the building.

Winter Quarter Start Date

The first day of Winter Quarter is Monday, January 6.

Holiday Reception

Due to space availability and student requests, our traditional start of Fall reception has become a holiday party. Join us later this week at 5pm on **Thursday December 5** in White Family Auditorium on the second floor of our building. Our traditional awards will be handed out. See details in the "Calendar and Events" section.

Director of Graduate Studies

Federico Bugni becomes DGS at the start of Winter Quarter. Professor Bugni is an alum of our doctoral program and served as DGS at Duke University. Current DGS **Marciano Siniscalchi** is transitioning to working with **Igal Hendel** on our graduate admissions team.

Graduate Studies Committee

The Graduate Studies Committee is a forum for feedback from graduate students to the faculty on the graduate curriculum, programming, and administrative processes. It meets each quarter.

The three elected student representatives for AY 2024-25 are **Vaidehi Parameswaran** (Second Year), **James Atkins** (Third Year) and **Sebastian Poblete Coddou** (Fourth Year). Students are encouraged to share academic and administrative concerns and suggestions with their representatives.

Faculty News

Kirabo Jackson has returned to campus after his leave of absence to serve on the Council of Economic Advisors.

Faculty Honors

Congratulations to **Mar Reguant** on her election as a Fellow of the Econometric Society. In addition, **Charles Manski** has been elected to the Executive Committee of the Econometric Society.

Visitors and Postdocs

Five of our existing visitors and postdocs remain with us for the entire year: labor economist **Abi Adams-Prassl** from the University of Oxford, theorist **Alex Smolin** from the Toulouse School of Economics, postdoc macroeconomists **Ryungha Oh** and **Jaeun Seo**, and postdoc historian **Jesse McDevitt-Irwin** who is

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teaching an undergraduate class in the Winter Quarter.

Two additional visitors are joining us for Winter and Spring Quarters: industrial organization economist **Jean-François Houde** from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and theorist **Dong Wei** from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Additional visitors in the Spring Quarter will be introduced in the March *Graduate Connection*.

For Your Information

Help and Support

We have collated together a list of help and support resources, both within the department and within the university. It is in the [Graduate > Current Student Resources](#) part of our website, and also in the *Graduate Student Handbook*. If you have any suggestions for additional topics, please tell **Lola Ittner**.

Graduate Student Opportunities Website

The Department has a website for graduate students with information on:

- Conferences
- Resources at NU
- Fellowships
- Programming at NU
- Events outside NU
- Counseling Services (CAPS)
- Job Opportunities

See the weekly update e-mail or visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/nuecon-grad-opportunities/home>

Good Progress Milestones

TGS requires that students receive annual feedback on their progress. In Economics this is done (for students currently in years two and above) by meeting with a faculty member and obtaining their signature certifying that you have met specific milestones.

Please take a moment to review these on our [website](#) so that you are well prepared for certifying good progress next summer.

For Those Serving as RAs or TAs

The department has prepared handbooks for those serving as Research Assistants (RAs) or Teaching Assistants (TAs). In addition to containing practical information, these documents contain information on these positions required as part of the collective bargaining agreement with NUGW-JE. These manuals are an integral part of your appointment letters. Read them at:

- [Teaching Assistant Manual](#)
- [Research Assistant Manual](#)

Calendar & Events

Holiday Party & Awards

Faculty, staff, and graduate students are invited to a holiday reception on **Thursday, December 5** from 4:00PM to 5:30PM in White Family Auditorium on the second floor of our building. Heavy appetizers and drinks are served.

We also honor the winner of the Department's Distinguished Teaching Assistant awards, the Bies Essay awards, and the Eisner Fellowship.

Upcoming Holiday Season

Friday December 13: Last day of Fall Quarter exams.

Monday December 16: Grades due - TAs must be available in Evanston until 3PM.

Wednesday December 23: Department administrative offices closed (University open).

Tuesday December 24: University closed for Winter Recess.

Thursday January 2: University reopens.

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Monday January 6: First day of Winter Quarter. TAs must be in Evanston to commence duties.

AEA Annual Meeting

The annual meetings of the American Economic Association are in San Francisco and run from Friday to Sunday January 3-5.

Graduate School Deadlines

Deadlines for students wishing to receive an MA or a PhD degree in March.

January 31: Application for a Degree.

February 28: Completed dissertation and all supporting materials for the PhD degree.

March 14: Final examination report and any change of grade forms for the MA degree.

If you wish to receive an MA or PhD degree in June, the Application for a Degree is **February 7**.

Event with Prof Kirabo Jackson

Professor **Kirabo Jackson** will be in conversation talking about his time in Washington at the Council of Economic Advisors at 5PM **Thursday, January 9** in White Family Auditorium. Watch your inbox for more details.

Martin L. King Jr. Day

On **Monday, January 20**, the University is closed, and all classes are canceled in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Bies Lecture

The annual Susan Bies (PhD, 1972) departmental lecture on economic policy is on **Tuesday, February 4** at 4PM in White Family Auditorium on the second floor. This year's speaker is **Michael Kremer** of the University of Chicago. He is a development economist and co-winner of the 2019 Nobel Prize. More details including the

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title and exact time will be circulated in January.

Spring Break!

Friday March 21: Last day of Winter Quarter exams.

Monday March 24: Grades due - TAs must be available in Evanston until 3PM.

Tuesday April 1: First day of Spring Quarter. TAs must be in Evanston to commence duties.

Save the Date

Friday and Saturday March 28 and 29: a conference on James A. Robinson's book manuscript *Wealth in People*.

Wednesday, April 9: The prospective PhD visit day.

Friday, April 25: conference on macroeconomics celebrating the retirement of Robert Gordon.

Friday and Saturday May 9 and 10: econometrics conference in honor of Joel Horowitz.

Friday, May 23: Economic history conference.

Week of June 23: transportation economics summer school and conference.

More details on these and additional events will be in the March *Graduate Connection*.

Teaching

Maintaining Full-time Status

You must be registered for at least three course credits each quarter to be considered a full-time student.

First year students are automatically full time in Fall, Winter and Spring as they are registered for 410, 411 and 480.

For students in years 2 and 3 in Fall, Winter and Spring Quarters, if you are registered for two courses you must add 1 unit of Economics 590. If you are registered for one or zero courses you must add TGS 500. TGS 500 is listed

for zero credits but assures full-time status (and allows registration in up to one course).

Students in years 4 and above should register for TGS 500 (or TGS 512 in certain circumstances) which is considered a full-time registration.

Students in all years should register for TGS 500 in summer quarter.

Incomplete Grades

The Department has a policy to avoid excessive awarding of incomplete grades. Please see our [website](#) for a complete statement. Report any problems to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Additional Field Course Option in Applied Micro and Public Economics

The department is pleased to introduce an additional course option to the approved Applied Microeconomics and Public Economics field sequences for AY 2024-25.

HDSP 430-0 *Economics of Social Policy* is taught in the Spring Quarter by Professor **Kirabo Jackson**. More details on this course can be obtained from Professor Jackson and in the March *Graduate Connection* newsletter.

This Quarter's Course Descriptions

Advice on Field Sequences

The Department has guidance on [acceptable field course sequences](#). These are posted in the Graduate > Degree Requirements and Goals > Second- and Third-Year Goals section of our website.

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Department of Economics Classes

Economics 412-2

Economic Theory and Methods

Professor Ely

MW 1:30-3:20

KGH 3301

In this course the students collectively as a class choose a research topic, work on it, write a paper and try to publish it. In the first couple of weeks Professor Ely describes 5-10 research ideas. The students discuss them, work out some preliminary analysis and then vote on a topic to work on for the rest of the quarter. Class meetings from then on comprise progress reports, guidance, and dividing up tasks.

Assessment is based on participation/contribution. Some of the potential ideas have empirical sides so students not necessarily theory-focused are invited too.

Economics 414-2

Economics of Information

Professor Pei

TTh 3:30-5:20

KGH 3301

This course covers a variety of topics in dynamic games and learning, including bargaining, repeated games, reputation effects, community enforcement, social learning, and steady-state learning. The models and analytical tools introduced in this course are valuable not only for students focused on economic theory, but also for those interested in macroeconomics, finance, and industrial organization.

Evaluation is by an in-class presentation or a final project.

Economics 416-2

Advanced Macroeconomics

Professor Känzig

M 3:30-5:20

W 4:00-5:50

KGH 3301

This is a course on modern empirical macroeconomics, covering

recent advances on identification and how micro data can be used to better understand macro phenomena. It surveys the recent surge in empirical work in macro and discuss how putting more emphasis on research design combined with more and better data has improved credibility and transparency, and how the new evidence can help to discriminate among competing theories.

The course aims to build up empirical tools and bring students to the research frontier. It covers two distinct approaches to empirical macro. The first exploits time-series variation for identification, exploiting narrative, high-frequency or other external information, and is top-down: identifying the macro effect and then mapping out the heterogeneous effects. The second approach is bottom-up: starting from micro data, such as cross-sectional or panel data on households, firms, or regions, to estimate a partial-equilibrium effect and impose additional structure to back out the aggregate effect. Throughout, the course covers exciting applications, ranging from the transmission of monetary and fiscal policy to the aggregate and distributional effects of energy price shocks and climate policy.

Evaluation is based on homework assignments, and an original research project.

Economics 420-2

European Economic History

Professor Mokyr

TTh 9:00-10:50

KGH 3301

The course is devoted to recent papers in economic history written in the language of modern economics and relying on its methods. Economic theory and econometric methods have been applied to historical issues utilizing new and innovative databases. The course surveys a sample of this recent literature, provides a historical context to them,

and aims to motivate and stimulate similar research.

Each class is devoted to a different topic that has been of concern to researchers in the field. Class attendance is required and is monitored, and non-attending students may be dropped from the course.

Each class session from week 3 onwards combines a lecture with student's presenting a "mock referee report" on an assigned paper from the reading list.

Evaluation is based on the in-class presentation and a substantial research paper, due one year after the end of the course.

Economics 425-2

Development Economics

Professor Udry

MW 1:00-2:50

KGH 1410

The goal is to introduce students to central issues in development economics and to explore the application of microeconomic analysis to gain deeper insights into these questions. The primary focus is on empirical research, emphasizing the interplay between theory, observation, experimentation and estimation and testing. We examine how research programs grow from these interactions within and across papers. Topics this year include household organization, gender, agriculture, technological change, risk and finance. Students are expected to read and comment on all the required reading and to participate in class discussion.

Evaluation is based on a series of assignments (referee reports and presentations) and a research proposal.

Economics 436-2

Public Finance

Professor Schnell

TTh 1:30-3:20

KGH 3301

Health Economics. This course introduces theoretical models and empirical applications in health economics. Topics include the production and measurement of health, the provision and design of health insurance, causes and consequences of provider behavior, and competition in health care markets.

The course complements Professor Dranove's MECS 551-1. Some topics build on work discussed in the Fall, but MECS 551-1 is not a prerequisite.

Evaluation is based on in-class presentations of research papers, a final exam, and an original research proposal or project.

Economics 450-2

Industrial Organization

Professor Bhattacharya

MW 11:00-12:50

KGH 1410

This course covers core topics in industrial organization. It focuses on empirics but covers relevant theory as needed. Topics include entry, search, price discrimination, bargaining, auctions, and matching markets. The emphasis can shift in response to student preferences.

Evaluation is based on problem sets and a research proposal, and may include oral presentations if time permits.

Economics 481-1

Advanced Econometrics

Professor Horowitz

TTh 11:00-12:50

KGH 1410

The Bootstrap in Econometrics. This course explains and illustrates the usefulness and limitations of the bootstrap and why it matters in applied research. The course covers the theory of the bootstrap, provides

numerical examples of its performance, and illustrates its uses in applied research. The course also explains how the bootstrap can be applied to time-series data. There are simple instructions on how to implement the bootstrap in applications.

There are occasional problem sets. Every student must write a one-page memo each week summarizing what was done in class that week. In addition, each student must write a paper and make a presentation of some course material to the class. There are no examinations.

Students who took Econ 481-2 with Professor Horowitz previously on a different topic and wish to take this course for credit, should register as normal as the course is listed as Econ 481-1 this year.

Economics 483

Applied Microeconometrics

Professor Manski

MW 9:00-10:50

KGH 3301

This course integrates elements of welfare economics and consequentialist decision theory with econometric study of identification and statistical imprecision to study the broad problem of social planning under uncertainty. Planning problems to be analyzed include treatment choice using data from randomized trials, clinical decisions in medicine, and climate policy.

The supplemental text is Charles Manski *Discourse on Social Planning under Uncertainty* (Cambridge U.P., 2024).

Evaluation is based on an original research paper due at the beginning of Spring Quarter. There are no exams or problem sets.

Other Departments' Classes

See the Department's field sequence guidance before registering for any of these classes.

Finance 585-2

Asset Pricing II

Professors Jiang / Papanikolaou

W 1:00-4:00

KGH 4302

This course covers advanced topics in the intersection of finance and macroeconomics. The class emphasizes current topics along with state-of-the-art tools.

The first part covers the basics of dynamic models of arbitrage pricing, portfolio choice, and equilibrium in frictionless markets. The second part covers a selection of topics of current interest: asymmetric information, incomplete markets, financial intermediation, international finance, and production-based models.

Evaluation is based on problem sets which emphasize both analytical as well as numerical skills. Familiarity with a modern computing language (MATLAB, Julia, or C++) is assumed.

Though the course proceeds at a brisk pace, familiarity with the material in FINC 585-1 is not required.

Finance 586-2

Corporate Finance II

Professors Benmelech / Matvos

F 9:00-12:00

KGH 4302

This first half of the course provides a review of topic related to financial intermediation including empirical tests of lending relationship, banks and the macro economy, securitization and household finance. The second half of the course focuses on structural models of financial intermediation covering models pertaining to the assets and liabilities of financial intermediaries and quantitative models of bank stability.

Finance 586-1 is a prerequisite, as is a good knowledge of applied econometrics.

Evaluation is based on six referee reports and a research proposal.

MECS 540-3

Political Economy: Social Choice and Voting Models

Professor Egorov

W 9:00-12:00

KGH 4273

This course is about various aspects of collective decision-making, both on the micro level (how people aggregate information and preferences through voting) and on the big picture level (how societies choose institutions to live under).

Initially some classical results from social choice are reviewed and limitations of the cooperative approach are highlighted. The course then analyzes strategic behavior in collective decision-making such as voting over agendas and legislative bargaining. The next topic deals with elections and decisions on whether and how to vote, whether to run, and how to campaign. The course then considers institutions including revolutions and coup d'états, and how, when and why countries democratize. The final topic is models of forward-looking behavior in collective decision-making and dynamics of institutions.

Evaluation is based on attendance and presentations of a few papers from the syllabus.

MECS 548-0

Innovation and the Science of Science

Professors Hill / Jones

M 3:30-6:30

KGH 5301

The course introduces both macroeconomic and microeconomic approaches to assessing the "ideas production function", with special attention to the roles of human capital, institutions, and incentive systems. The role of science and scientific progress are also considered in depth.

The course emphasizes how the unusual characteristics of ideas can result in social inefficiency, and how the institutional and policy environment influences the gap between private and social welfare. In tandem with theoretical approaches,

this course reviews the core empirical literature, including methods and data sets that are suited to studying ideas and innovation.

The course is appropriate for students in economics, as innovation touches virtually all fields of economics -- including economic growth, industrial organization, labor economics, finance, the economics of organizations, and urban economics. The course also provides an inroad to the growing field of the "science of science," which emphasizes the use of high-scale data, network methods, and machine learning, together with more traditional econometric approaches, to understand the science and innovation process and implications for society.

Evaluation is based on two referee reports and a group research paper proposal (8-10 pages) relevant to the topics of the class. This course can form a sequence with MECS 549-1, but either course may be taken as stand-alone material.

MECS 550-3

Economic Theory III: Doing Research in Economic Theory and Related Areas

Professor Sandroni

Th 6:00-9:00pm

KGH 4130

This course relies on informal discussions of research ideas. The main objective is to find good dissertation projects and to develop these projects. In sum, the main idea is to facilitate the transition from student to researcher using a learning by doing approach. The research topics depend on students' interest and are typically determined in the first and second classes. There are no exams.

MECS 560-2

Dynamic Optimization in Economics

Professor Molavi

M 1:00-4:00

KGH 4302

The course covers the models and mathematical techniques for discrete and continuous-time dynamic optimization under uncertainty, with an emphasis on applications in economics. It covers the variational approach, dynamic programming, Bellman equation and the principle of optimality, the optimal-control approach, the HJB equation, stopping-time problems, multi-armed bandits, and the Gittins' index theorem.

Evaluation is based on several problem sets and a final exam. The main textbooks are *Recursive Methods in Economic Dynamics* by Stokey, Lucas, and Prescott (Harvard U.P., 1989), *Introduction to Modern Economic Growth* by Acemoglu (Princeton U. P., 2009), and *Optimal Stopping and Applications* by Ferguson (online lecture notes).

MECS 570-1

Economics of Organizations

Professor Powell

F 1:30-4:30

KGH 5201

This course is an introduction to research in organizational economics, which can be succinctly described as the economics of managed relationships. This course focuses on theories of incentives, adaptation, and firm boundaries, with the aim of understanding how firm practices affect and are affected by the broader economy. The main practical emphasis is on developing applied modeling skills.

Evaluation is by an in-class presentations of a recent paper.

The required text is *The Handbook of Organizational Economics*, edited by Gibbons and Roberts, (Princeton U.P. 2013).

Econ 501 Seminar

The draft assignment of people to dates and times for Spring Quarter are announced by e-mail on February 1. The (random) order of presentations was included in last March's edition and is:

Lara, Jose
Bitencourt, Pedro
Manili, Julien
Novikov, Tomer
Chaudhary, Vasu
Sun, Jialu
Malpassi, Franco
Borja Arriaga, Daniela
Cisternas, Rosario
Lee, Seung Hyeong
Rajan, Aastha
Atkins, James
Gosselin, Jacob
Ben-Porath, Netanel
Aldighieri, Pedro
Gudissa, Sorenien
Saito, Nicole
Kelekidou, Eleftheria
Livingston, Brian
Amburgey, Aaron
Ridland, Harrison
Raghavan, Ramya

Funding

Spring Quarter Funding

Spring Quarter funding encompasses the March, April, and May paychecks. The last day for notifying us of any changes to your existing funding for Spring is **February 15**. If you obtain a new external fellowship, send the details and your offer letter to the Graduate Program Manager. If you are being appointed as a stipend RA, the faculty member fills in an online form detailing the funding source for the RAship.

NU Dissertation Year Fellowships in Spring

Dissertation Year University Fellowships (DYUF) are usually taken in the spring quarter of the year prior to going on the job market, and the fall and winter quarters of the job market year. To qualify for the spring quarter fellowship, students should ask their advisor to file the [Spring Certification of Intent to Enter the Job Market](#) (Form GS5) with the Graduate Program Manager between February 1 and February 15.

Funding for Research-Related Expenses

TGS has available funds to pay for research expenses. The maximum one-time research grant is \$3,000. Full details of the application procedure and links to application forms are on the [research-related expenses web page](#). These awards are given twice a year. The next deadline is mid-March.

Funding for Conference Expenses

TGS also has funds available for travel to conferences. There is funding for two conferences during your time at Northwestern that covers up to a maximum of \$800 for each conference. Full details of the application procedures and links to application forms are on the [research-related expenses web page](#).

A special note. TGS allocates a budget every three months for conference travel. If you are planning conference travel in the period December 1 – February 28, you should apply immediately as applications are denied when the budget runs out. Applications for travel between March 1 and May 31 open on January 24. Apply early!

Additional Work

It is possible for Fellowship holders to supplement their fellowship by working for hourly pay as a research assistant, tutor, grader, proctor or performing other administrative tasks for a maximum of 20 hours per week. The 20 hours a week is the aggregate of all paid work from all sources combined. For all but the most minimal assignments (< \$600) a permission to work form must be filed with TGS.

Students funded as TAs or as stipend RAs are already presumed to be working for 20 hours a week, and additional paid work is not allowed.

Read more in a [statement on our website](#).

Next Edition

Volume 30, number 3 will be published on March 3.
