

# AIKO SCHMEISSER

University of Potsdam, August-Bebel-Str. 89, 14482 Potsdam, Germany

[schmeisser@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:schmeisser@uni-potsdam.de) | [aikoschmeisser.com](http://aikoschmeisser.com)

Last updated: September 2024

## RESEARCH FIELDS

---

Labor Economics, Political Economy

## EDUCATION

---

**Berlin School of Economics & University of Potsdam** 2020 - 2025

Ph.D. in Economics

Thesis Committee: Marco Caliendo, Thomas Siedler

**Harvard University** 2024

Visiting research fellow at the Center for Labor and a Just Economy

**University of Göttingen** 2018 - 2020

M.Sc. in International Economics

**University of Bayreuth** 2014 - 2018

B.Sc. in Economics, B.A. in International Economics and Development

## JOB MARKET PAPER

---

**Do Unions Shape Political Ideologies at Work?** (with Johannes Matzat), CESifo Working Paper No. 10301.  
[\[latest version\]](#)

Labor unions' greatest potential for political influence likely arises from their direct connection to millions of individuals at the workplace. There, they may change the ideological positions of both unionizing workers and their non-unionizing management. In this paper, we analyze the workplace-level impact of unionization on workers' and managers' political campaign contributions over the 1980-2016 period in the United States. To do so, we link establishment-level union election data with transaction-level campaign contributions to federal and local candidates. In a difference-in-differences design that we validate with regression discontinuity tests and a novel instrumental variables approach, we find that unionization leads to a leftward shift of campaign contributions. Unionization increases the support for Democrats relative to Republicans not only among workers but also among managers, which speaks against an increase in political cleavages between the two groups. We provide evidence that our results are not driven by compositional changes of the workforce and are weaker in states with Right-to-Work laws where unions can invest fewer resources in political activities.

## WORKING PAPERS

---

**Racial Peer Effects at Work: Evidence from Worker Deaths in Brazil** (with Katharina Fietz). World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 10899. [\[link\]](#)

This paper studies the impact of working with same-race coworkers on individuals' retention at firms. Using administrative employer-employee data from Brazil, the paper exploits unexpected deaths of workers from different racial groups as exogenous shocks to peer group composition. The findings show that a decrease in the non-white share of coworkers reduces the retention of non-white workers but does not affect the retention of white workers. The effects are driven by non-whites quitting and moving to new jobs with more peers of the same race than in their old jobs. The findings highlight how peer dynamics can contribute to racial segregation across workplaces.

**The Accuracy of Job Seekers' Wage Expectations** (with Marco Caliendo, Robert Mahlstedt, and Sophie Wagner), IZA Discussion Paper No. 17198. [\[link\]](#)

We study the accuracy of job seekers' wage expectations by comparing subjective beliefs to objective benchmarks using linked administrative and survey data. Our findings show that especially job seekers with low objective earnings potential and those predicted to face a penalty compared to their pre-unemployment wage display overly optimistic wage expectations. Moreover, wage optimism is amplified by increased job search incentives and job seekers with overoptimistic wage expectations tend to overestimate their reemployment chances. We discuss the labor market implications of wage optimism, as well as the role of information frictions and motivated beliefs as sources of overoptimism.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

---

**Job Loss and Political Entry** (with Laura Barros)

**Endogenous Racial Identities in the Labor Market** (with Pedro C. Sant'Anna and Sulin Sardoschau)

## PRE-PHD PUBLICATIONS

---

A Tale of (Almost) 1001 Coefficients: Deep and Heterogeneous Effects of the EU-Turkey Customs Union (with Mario Larch and Joschka Wanner), 2021, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 59(2), 242-260. [\[link\]](#)

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

---

### Conference and Seminar Presentations

American Economic Association & Allied Social Science Associations (San Francisco) [scheduled] 2025

Verein für Socialpolitik (Berlin), IZA Summer School (Bonn), Society of Labor Economists (Portland), European Economic Association (Rotterdam), Economics PhD Conference (Warwick), RIDGE / LACEA Workshops on Labor & Political Economy (Santiago de Chile), European Society for Population Economics (Rotterdam), Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago), Political Economy Workshop (Harvard), Applied Young Economist Webinar (online) 2024

European Association of Labor Economics (Prague), European Economic Association (Barcelona), Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics (Frankfurt), European Society for Population Economics (Belgrade), IAAEU Colloquium on Economics (Trier), Research Seminar in Economics (Potsdam) 2023

ifo Workshop on Political Economy (Dresden), Verein für Socialpolitik (Basel), European Association of Labor Economics (Padua), European Society for Population Economics (Calabria), Research Seminar for Applied Microeconomics (FU Berlin), BeNA Winter Workshop (Berlin), BSE Summer Workshop (Berlin) 2022

European Association of Labor Economics (online), European Society for Population Economics (online) 2021

### Services to the Profession

Referee for *Empirical Economics*, *Labour Economics*, *Journal of Labor Market Research*

Board member and treasurer of the Berlin Network of Labor Market Research (BeNA) [\[link\]](#) 2024 -

## SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

---

Joachim Herz Add-on Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Economics and Interdisciplinary Business Administration, 12,500 Euro 2023 - 2025

DAAD Research Stay Grant for Doctoral Students, 4,600 Euro 2024

Wicksell Prize of the European Public Choice Society, 2nd place for the research paper "Do Unions Shape Political Ideologies at Work?" 2023

Student scholarship Konrad Adenauer Foundation 2015 - 2018

## TEACHING

---

### University of Potsdam

Policy Evaluation (practical session, graduate level) Summer 2023

Advanced Microeconometrics (practical session, graduate level) Winter 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24

Advanced Methods and Applications in Policy Evaluation (seminar, graduate level) Winter 2022/23

Research Idea Development Seminar (seminar, graduate level) Winter 2021/22, 2023/24

Methods in Policy Evaluation (seminar, undergraduate level) Summer 2022, 2023, 2024

Statistics (practical session, undergraduate level) Summer 2022

Supervision of final theses (7× undergraduate and 3× graduate level) Winter 2021/22 - Summer 2024

**University of Bayreuth**

Macroeconomics I (practical session, undergraduate level)

Microeconomics I (practical session, undergraduate level)

Summer 2016, 2017

Winter 2015/16

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

---

**University of Potsdam**

2021 -

Research Assistant at Chair of Empirical Economics

**University of Göttingen**

2018 - 2020

Student Research Assistant at the Research Training Group Globalization and Development

Fieldwork Assistant for RCT in Cambodia

**German Council of Economic Experts**

2018

Internship at Labor Market Team of Scientific Staff

**University of Bayreuth**

2017 - 2018

Student Research Assistant at Chair of Development Economics

**German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy**

2017

Internship at Department for Trade Policy with North America

**SKILLS**

---

**Programming**Stata, R,  $\text{\LaTeX}$ **Languages**

German (native), English (fluent), Spanish (intermediate)