

# Benjamin T. Blemings

Phone: (304)-216-3069  
Email: [bbleming@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:bbleming@mix.wvu.edu)  
Web: [www.benblemings.com](http://www.benblemings.com)  
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Department of Economics  
West Virginia University  
1601 University Avenue  
Morgantown, WV 26501

## Education

**West Virginia University**  
Ph.D., *Economics*

**Expected Graduation:** May 2021

**Miami University (OH)**  
B.S., *Quantitative Economics*, Departmental Honors  
**Thesis:** Alcohol Sales, Crime, and College Football

2011 - 2015  
Adviser: Dr. William Even

## Research

**Interests:** Human Capital, Causal Inference, Economics of Education  
**Fields:** Health, Public, Regional/Urban

## Teaching

**Instructed:** Intermediate Microeconomic Theory (X2), Microeconomic Principles (X3 On-line, X2 In-Person), Survey of Economics (Online)  
**Assisted:** Business Statistics, Microeconomic Principles, Graduate Microeconomic Theory  
**Interests:** Applied Econometrics, Economics of Education, Economics of Opportunity

## Fellowships, Awards

Jon Vilasuso Advanced Graduate Student, *WVU Economics Department* 2020  
Graduate Assistantship, *West Virginia University, Center for Free Enterprise* 2016 -

## Working Papers

**“College Merit-Aid and Academic Renewal Thresholds: Evidence from Interactions of Discontinuous Rules” (JMP) [Paper Link](#)**  
*Winner of NARSC 2020 Graduate Student Paper Competition [Website Link](#)*

**Abstract:** Merit-based financial aid programs are amongst the largest sources of financial aid for college, yet estimated effects may be biased by students sorting into treatment due to known academic cutoffs. This paper estimates how likely students are to meet minimum academic renewal requirements, in a state where sorting into treatment has been shown, by using an unmanipulated birthdate cutoff created by compulsory kindergarten entry laws. Fuzzy regression discontinuity shows being born slightly after the cutoff, 14 years before the college program begins, leads to a 49.6 percentage point (pp) increase in scholarship receipt. Difference in discontinuity estimates, accounting for potential relative age and season of birth confounding, find students are 24 pp more likely to exceed GPA and completed credits renewal requirements. The results suggest GPA or credits thresholds are equally effective, advancing the literature on behavioral aspects of large merit-aid programs and informing their design.

**““Not So Fast: Alcohol Sales to College Football General Seating Reduces Crime” [Paper Link](#)**

**“Unintentional Effects of International Aid on Violence: Evidence from Somali Piracy & Ocean Wind Speeds”** *(with Gregory DeAngelo)* [Paper Link](#)

**Abstract:** Maritime piracy is a prominent form of violence in countries (e.g. Somalia) that face struggling institutions. An unintended consequence of piracy deterrence is reduced opportunity costs of violence on land. This paper examines how deterring pirates impacts land conflict. To overcome endogeneity, we exploit variation from ocean wind speeds using instrumental variables. We find one fewer pirate attack leads to approximately 18-30% more land violence and 9.11 more land conflict deaths, suggesting naval patrols harm So-malian institutions and safety. The results imply stopping piracy saves shipping companies \$343,318,180 at the cost of 565 So-malian land fatalities annually.

**“Disamenity or a Signal of Competence? The Empirical Political Economy of Local Road Maintenance”** *(with Margaret Bock)* [Paper Link](#)

**“Hoggin’ the Road: Pork Slaughterhouses Increase Truck Traffic, Reducing Road Quality”** *(with Margaret Bock and Alexandre Scarcioffolo)* [Paper Link](#)

## Works in Progress

**“Peer Effects on Non-Cognitive Ability”** *(with Scott Cunningham & Matthew Pearson)*

**“Returns to Workplace Utilization: Evidence From High School Recruiting and Barely Starting in the NBA”** *(with Alex Cardazzi)*

**“What Do College Students Drink With Merit-Based Aid?”**

## Conference Presentations

Southern Economic Association, 2020	Virtual
North American Regional Science Council (NARSC), 2020	Virtual
Eastern Economics Association, 2020	Boston, MA
North American Regional Science Council, 2019	Pittsburgh, PA
Public Choice, 2019	Louisville, KY
Eastern Economics Association, 2019	New York City, NY
Applied Economics in Regional and Urban Science, 2018	Morgantown, WV
Economics of Corruption, 2017	Passau, Germany

## Referee

Contemporary Economic Policy (X3), Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy, International Journal of Sports Finance

## Book Chapters

“Economics of the NFL” in *Handbook of Sports Economics*, Downward, P., Frick, B., Humphreys, B. Pawlowski, T., Ruseski J., and Soebbing B. eds., Sage Publications, in press.

## Membership

American Economic Association

## References

**Adam Nowak, Ph.D.** (Advisor)

Associate Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
West Virginia University  
Email: Adam.Nowak@mail.wvu.edu  
Phone: 304-293-7868

**Scott Cunningham, Ph.D.**

Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
Baylor University  
Email: Scott\_Cunningham@Baylor.edu  
Phone: 254-710-4753

**Daniel Grossman, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
West Virginia University  
Email: Daniel.Grossman@mail.wvu.edu  
Phone: 304-293-7860

**Bryan McCannon, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
West Virginia University  
Email: Bryan.McCannon@mail.wvu.edu

**Brad Humphreys, Ph.D.**

Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
West Virginia University  
Email: Brad.Humphreys@mail.wvu.edu