

Meeting Time: Thursday 3pm to 5pm, Sever 203

Course Goals:

In this course we hope students will learn how to generate evidence and assess policies'™ impacts. Generating credible evidence is difficult. We may want to know a program'™s impact on variables like wellbeing, attitudes, or behaviors that are hard to measure. Many policies -- like providing job search assistance to only some jobseekers or educating older siblings -- impact people outside the program. Initiatives'™ impacts also depend on what beneficiaries would do in their absence. For example, publicly-funded pre-school will likely have different impacts on families if it substitutes for parental care or privately-funded pre-school.

We will discuss these issues and others through the lens of field experiments, experiments in real-world settings. Because treatment is randomized and the experimenter has a lot of control, field experiments are the perfect setting to discuss the type of evidence we'™d like to craft good policies. Experiments are also particularly useful in understanding the impacts of variables that are traditionally hard to isolate, like peer pressure or inequality.

During the class, students will apply the methods we discuss to the areas they are interested in through designing two experiments. For example, past students have been interested in topics like education, mental health, climate change, discrimination, and criminal justice. Students aren'™t expected to implement the experiments they design, but several have continued with their projects after the class, either as part of a research project or because they are interested in implementing a policy they designed in a non-randomized way.

There will also be some readings and weekly assignments related to the readings or to the two experimental designs.

Final paper due: 5/2/24 at 2pm

Course Syllabus:

[Field Experiments Spring 2024.pdf](#)

Readings:

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/129800/pages/readings>

Lecture Slides:

[Intro to Experiments](#)

[Power Calculations](#)

[Externalities](#)

[Experiments and Policy](#)

Power Calculation Spreadsheet

[Spreadsheet](#) (We used 1.0 IRA for randomization at the individual level and 3.1 for cluster randomized trials.)

[Link to Power Up](#) (We are using the spreadsheet for the main effects.)