




Alok Ranjan

CONTACT INFORMATION

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DOCTORAL STUDIES

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Ph.D. in Economics


May 2025 (expected)


DISSERTATION: "Essays in Applied Microeconomics"

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES:

Prof. David Albouy (Chair)
Department of Economics
University of Illinois
 albouy@illinois.edu

Prof. Alex Bartik
Department of Economics
University of Illinois
 abartik@illinois.edu

Prof. Mark Borgschulte
Department of Economics
University of Illinois
 markborg@illinois.edu

Prof. Rebecca Thornton
Hankamer School of Business
Baylor University
 rebecca_thornton@baylor.edu

PRIOR STUDIES

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

2017

M.S. in Economics, GPA: 10/10

M.S. Thesis: *Climate Change and Dairy Productivity*

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

2016

B.S. in Economics

RESEARCH FIELDS

Primary: Public Economics, Political Economy, Urban Economics,
Secondary: Applied Microeconomics, Labor Economics

WORKING PAPERS

Judicial Transparency and Criminal Justice, Job Market Paper
(with [Felipe Diaz](#) and [Anna Kyriazis](#))

Elected officials at all levels of governance routinely make decisions that affect large populations, often without public scrutiny. In the judiciary, elected judges exercise significant discretion in imposing monetary sanctions, yet their decisions are typically opaque to the public. This paper examines how increasing the transparency of judicial decisions affects the imposition of court fees and fines. Exploiting a policy change in North Carolina that made judges' court cost waiver decisions publicly accessible, we employ a regression discontinuity design to estimate the causal effect of transparency on judicial behavior. We find that after the policy change, judges granted waivers at twice the pre-reform rate. Examining the broader consequences of transparency-induced changes in waiver practices, we find that reductions in monetary obligations led to lower recidivism rates and improved timely compliance among defendants. Despite increased waivers, I find no decline in collected revenue, consistent with judges primarily granting waivers to defendants who were least likely to comply with monetary obligations. These findings highlight how electoral accountability shapes judicial discretion and the financial and behavioral consequences of transparency in the criminal justice system.

Housing Demand, Cost-of-Living Inequality, and the Affordability Crisis,
(with [David Albouy](#), [Gabriel Ehrlich](#), and [Yingyi Liu](#))

Since 1970, housing's relative price, share of expenditure, and "unaffordability" have all grown. We estimate housing demand using a novel compensated framework over space and an uncompensated framework over time. Our specifications pass tests imposed by rationality and household mobility. Housing demand is income and price inelastic, and appears to fall with household size. We provide a numerical non-homothetic constant elasticity of substitution utility function for improved quantitative modeling. An ideal cost-of-living index demonstrates that the poor have been disproportionately impacted by rising relative rents, which have greatly amplified increases in real income inequality.

Jurisdiction size, political participation and competition

This paper examines the causal effect of jurisdiction size on political participation, political selection, and political competition. I leverage a quasi-natural experiment that exogenously determined the size of over 50,000 local government units based on population threshold in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Using a regression discontinuity design, I find strong effects of the size of the electorate on voter turnout, with a 10% decrease in jurisdiction size resulting in a 0.6% higher turnout rate in local elections. The quality of contesting candidates and the characteristics of the winners do not vary systematically with jurisdiction size. Additionally, I provide a test of the rational choice model of voting by simulating millions of elections and show that voter turnout increases with an increase in pivotal probabilities.

The Affordable Care Act, Breastfeeding, and Women's Labor Market Outcomes,
(with [Mark Borgschulte](#) and [Rebecca Thornton](#))

The first year of a child's life is a critical period not only for the child's development but also for the mother's labor market prospects. Research shows that gender gaps over the life cycle, often referred to as the "motherhood penalty," are closely associated with childbirth. In this paper, we analyze labor market trajectories of mothers and fathers around childbirth, utilizing restricted-access, full-count data from the American Community Survey (ACS). Uniquely, we observe parents' employment patterns both before and after childbirth, allowing us to examine month-by-month labor dynamics and track the onset and persistence of gendered labor outcomes associated with the motherhood penalty. Additionally, we examine whether policies help close some of these gaps? The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provided a number of provisions designed to support breastfeeding at workplace. We assess the impact of breastfeeding provisions under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on mothers' labor supply, including employment and timing of return to work, and examine how these effects vary across characteristics such as first-time motherhood, race and education.

Impact of weather extremes on Dairy Farming: Long-term evidence from California, (with [Deep Mukherjee](#))

Revise & Resubmit, Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics

WORKS IN
PROGRESS

Municipal Annexations: Determinants and Consequences

Fiscal Spillovers and Public Official Incentives,
(with [Felipe Diaz](#), [Anna Kyriazis](#), and [Cameron Milani](#))

The Heat of the Moment: Temperature's Role in Shaping Classroom Dynamics,
with [Wilfried Adohinzin](#), [Aditi Arvind](#), and [Mahounan Yedomiffi](#)

PUBLICATIONS	“Assessing the linkage between dairy productivity growth and climatic variability: The case of New York State” with Deep Mukherjee (2018). <i>Open Agriculture</i> , 2018, 3(1), pp. 658-669.	
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Instructor, University of Illinois <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Public Finance <i>Fall 2021, Spring 2022</i> Economics of Labor Markets <i>Fall 2020</i> Teaching Assistant, University of Illinois <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Statistics II <i>Spring 2019, 2020, 2021, Fall 2019</i> Principles of Macroeconomics <i>Fall 2018</i> International Macroeconomics <i>Spring 2025</i> 	
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE	Special Sworn Status Researcher, United States Census Bureau <i>March 2022–present</i> Research Assistant to Prof. David Albouy <i>August 2019–July 2020, Summer 2022–present</i> Research Assistant to Prof. Alex Bartik <i>August 2022–August 2024</i> Research Assistant to Prof. Mark Borgschulte <i>Summer 2022, 2023</i> Research Assistant to Prof. Rebecca Thornton <i>Summer 2022, 2023</i> Research Assistant to Prof. Sanjay Singh <i>May–July 2014</i>	
AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS	Robert Willis Harbeson Memorial Dissertation Fellowship – University of Illinois <i>2022</i> Carla Tighe Murray Dissertation Support Scholarship – University of Illinois <i>2022</i> List of Teachers Ranked Excellent – University of Illinois <i>2019, 2020, 2021, 2022</i> Graduate Fellowship, Department of Economics – University of Illinois <i>2017-18</i> Best Undergraduate Project Award – IIT Kanpur <i>2017</i> Academic Excellence Award – IIT Kanpur <i>2016-17</i> Research Fellowship Award – MHRD, Government of India <i>2016-17</i> Inspire Scholarship – Government of India <i>2013</i>	
CONFERENCES	Southern Economic Association Conference <i>2024</i> University of Illinois Job Market Workshop (x3) <i>2022-2024</i> University of Illinois Applied Micro Seminars (x5) <i>2021-2024</i> Southern Economic Association Conference (attendee) <i>2022</i>	
SKILLS	Languages: English (fluent), Hindi (native), Maithili (native) Programming: Stata, R, Python Teaching: Proficient in Moodle and Canvas LMS, offline and online teaching modalities	
CITIZENSHIP	India	