Michael Cai

Northwestern Economics

CONTACT INFORMATION Department of Economics Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive

Evanston, IL 60208

Mobile: 832-758-7670 michaelcai@u.northwestern.edu

www.michaelcai.com Citizenship: USA

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Macroeconomics, Behavioral Economics, Time-series Econometrics

EDUCATION

Ph.D in Economics, Northwestern University

2025 (expected)

2017

Committee: Matthias Doepke (Chair), George Marios Angeletos, Matthew Rognlie B.S. summa cum laude in Economics, New York University Stern School of Business

Job Market Paper

HANK with Actual Expectations

A key aspect of business cycles is the sluggish response of aggregate variables to macroeconomic shocks. This inertia interests researchers, as many HANK models struggle to replicate it, and policymakers because it complicates the timing of interventions. I show that canonical perpetual youth and standard incomplete markets models — the core of modern HANK models — can match this fact simply by replacing traditional assumptions on expectation formation with expectations data. Although many existing theories of expectation formation fail to match patterns of forecast errors observed in expectations data, a simple model of Bayesian learning can explain them. Building on this, I characterize the mechanisms that produce inertia in a stylized HANK model with learning and offer a new perspective on two core dimensions of policy choice 1) responsiveness to fluctuations, e.g. the slope of the Taylor rule, and 2) length of time government debt is rolled over. Changing policy along these dimensions alters inertia in shock transmission through an expectations anchoring channel, offering a novel explanation for transmission lags and how to shorten them.

SELECTED WORKS IN PROGRESS

Optimal Long-Run Fiscal Policy with Heterogeneous Agents

(with Adrien Auclert, Matthew Rognlie, and Ludwig Straub)

We introduce a new method for characterizing the steady state of dynamic Ramsey problems, building on the dual approach to optimal taxation. Applying this method to standard calibrations of heterogeneous-agent models à la Aiyagari (1995), we find that in many cases Ramsey steady states do not exist, with our results suggesting that long-run immiseration is optimal instead. When Ramsey steady states do exist, they are associated with optimal long-run labor income taxes close to 100%. We show that these conclusions are related to strong anticipatory effects of future tax changes.

PUBLICATIONS

Online Estimation of DSGE Models

(with Marco Del Negro, Edward Herbst, Ethan Matlin, Reca Sarfati, and Frank Schorfheide) The Econometrics Journal: Volume 24, Issue 1, Jan 2021, Pg. C33-C58

DSGE Forecasts of the Lost Recovery

(with Marco Del Negro, Marc P. Giannoni, Abhi Gupta, Pearl Li, and Erica Moszkowski) *International Journal of Forecasting*: Volume 35, Issue 4, Oct-Dec 2019, Pg. 1770-1789

AWARDS

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Behavioral Macroeconomics

Graduate Fellowship (Northwestern University)

Award for Excellence in Economics (Single awardee from NYU Stern)

2019–23

2017

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE	Research Assistant, Prof. Matthias Doepke, Northwestern University Research Assistant, Prof. Matthew Rognlie, Northwestern University Senior Research Analyst, Dr. Marco Del Negro, Federal Reserve Bank of New York Research Assistant, Prof. Tim Christensen, New York University	2022-23 2021-22 2017-19 2016-17
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Intermediate Macroeconomics, Prof. Mark Witte, Northwestern University Intermediate Macroeconomics, Prof. Giorgio Primiceri, Northwestern University	2023 2021
OTHER Experience	Visiting Scholar, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Research Officer, International Monetary Fund	2024 2022

PROGRAMMING Python, Julia, Matlab

LANGUAGES English (native), Chinese (basic)

REFERENCES Professor Matthias Doepke

Department of Economics London School of Economics

Houghton Street

London, England WC2A 2AE

m.doepke@lse.ac.uk

Professor Matthew Rognlie Department of Economics Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208

matthew.rognlie@northwestern.edu

Professor George Marios Angeletos

Department of Economics Northwestern University 2211 Campus Drive Evanston, IL 60208

angeletos@northwestern.edu

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