Introduction to Handling Data

ECON20222 - Lecture 1

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What is this course unit about

The main task here is to You: “work”

I: “shop” around for good ideas!

Data and files available from: https://github.com/datasquad/Rteaching

My context

- Teaching “large” course units to economics/business students
- Core material is econometrics (Stats applied to economic data - the cult of causal inference)
- R is taught as an “add-on”

Issues that arise

- “Why do I have to do this?”/“Is this on the exam?”
- Too little resources to run frequent labs
- Many students with no programming exposure

Aim for today

Develop ideas on how to help students to become resilient "coders"

- Gain motivation
- Don't be thrown off the rails by problems
- Develop self-help skills

Let's assume the following

The statistical techniques we want students to be able to implement are:

- Importing data
- Cleaning data
- Merging data
- Summary stats
- Plotting data
- Regressions analysis
- Hypothesis testing

The traditional way

Here is how we tend to deliver the R-component

- Make code and data for analysis used in lectures available
- Set extra weekly worksheets (see "Week3practice.pdf")
- Have website with material to learn R (Google "ECLR R" to find it)
- Have "smallish" assessment items which assume that students have done some data work (see "CW3 201516.pdf")
- Drop-in help sessions
- Perhaps one introductory lab
- Link to Datacamp

But self-learning has limitations

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- The fear of plagiarism
- They think they will break the computer if they make a mistake

Plan for today

Think about how we can help students to develop these vital coding skills

Our testbed

The projects

- Measuring climate change
- Collecting and analysing data from experiments
- Measuring the effect of a sugar tax
- Measuring wellbeing
- Measuring inequality: Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients
- Measuring management practices
- Supply and demand
- Measuring the non-monetary cost of unemployment
- Credit-excluded households in a developing country
- Characteristics of banking systems around the world
- Measuring willingness to pay for climate change mitigation
- Government policies and popularity: Hong Kong cash handout

Measuring the effect of a sugar tax

Basic data structure

`dat_c` contains observations for products (`product_id`) for which prices are observed in the same store (`store_id`) at three points in time (`time` - DEC2014, JUN2015, MAR2016).

A sugar tax was introduced on some products (`dat_c$taxed == "taxed"`), sometime between DEC2014 and MAR2016.

Things we do in the project

- Find out how many products and stores there are
- Frequency Tables
- Calculating the
- Column/Bar chats
- Testing for statistical significance in Price changes

Your task

Think how you could use the available data to introduce students to one of the vital, generic programming skills

- Understand the RStudio architecture
- The need to write a code file (.r or .Rmd)
- Understand and learn from error messages
- How to google effectively for help
- How to pick someone else's code and adapt it
- Trial and error

Email finished products to ralffbecker@gmail.com (yes, two fs)