Matthew W. Thomas

Last updated 13th October, 2022

Northwestern
Economics

Placement Director:	Professor Alessandro Pavan	847-491-8266	alepavan@northwestern.edu
Placement Administrator:	Lola Ittner	847-491-8200	econjobmarket@northwestern.edu

Contact Information

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

Mobile: 646-491-0173
mthomas@u.northwestern.edu
www.sites.northwestern.edu/mtp3384
Citizenship: United States

Fields

Research: Microeconomic Theory

Teaching: Applied Microeconomics, Industrial Organization, Microeconomic Theory

Education

Ph.D., Economics, Northwestern University　　　　　　　　　　　　　(anticipated) 2023
　　Committee: Asher Wolinsky (Chair), Wojciech Olszewski, Bruno Strulovici

B.A., Mathematics and Economics, Williams College　　　　　　　　　　　　　2017

Fellowships & Awards

Dissertation University Fellowship, Northwestern University　　　　　2022–2023
Carl Van Duyne Prize　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　2017
Sentinels Fellowship　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　2015

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University　　　　　　　　　　2018-Present
　　Intro to Microeconomics, Introduction to Applied Econometrics, Natural Resource Economics, Economics of Education, Marketing Analytics (Kellogg), Business Strategy (Kellogg), Programming (Kellogg)

Teaching Assistant, Williams College　　　　　　　　　　　　　　2015–2016
　　Intro to Development Economics, Probability

Research Experience

Research Assistant, Ivan A. Canay, Northwestern University　　　　　　　2021

Conferences

Conference on "Contests: Theory and Evidence"

Refereeing

American Economic Review, Economics Letters, Journal of Open Source Software, Review of Economic Design

Job Market Paper

"Robust Regulation of Wages and Hours"

Abstract: When workers' hours and wages are bargained jointly, workers may not receive their preferred hours for their wage. This paper studies labor market regulation when it is known that workers prefer to work fewer hours (are overworked), but specific knowledge of production, labor disutility, and bargaining protocol is absent. We show that for a large class of bargaining protocols, there is regulation that robustly increases worker utility without sacrificing total surplus. We use this model to motivate the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act.

Other Papers

"Asymmetric All-Pay Contests with Spillovers" with Maria Betto

Abstract: When opposing parties compete for a prize, the sunk effort players exert during the conflict can affect the value of the winner's reward. These *spillovers* can have substantial influence on the equilibrium behavior of participants in applications such as lobbying, warfare, labor tournaments, marketing, and R&D races. To understand this influence, we study a general class of asymmetric, two–player all-pay contests where we allow for spillovers in each player's reward. The link between participants' efforts and rewards yields

novel effects – in particular, players with higher costs and lower values than their opponent sometimes extract larger payoffs.

"Choice over Assessments" with Maria Betto

Abstract: There are many settings where agents with differing types choose among assessments that attempt to measure these types. For example, students may take either the SAT or ACT. Bond issuers may choose between the three main rating agencies. Assessments that provide higher ratings are obviously preferable to all agents. Preferences over risk are less obvious. Intuitively, low types prefer less accurate assessments because they can benefit more from mistakes. High types prefer more accurate assessments because they benefit from an accurate description of their type. We propose a condition on the assessments that ensures agents will choose them in an assortative manner. If the assessments have only two scores, this condition implies Blackwell's informativeness criterion. However, this does not hold with three or more scores. When the assessments give the same unconditional distribution of scores, our condition implies the concordance order. We extend the analysis to repeated testing and mechanism design. We show that a principal can use menus of garbled assessments to improve the informativeness of high scores.

"Covert Discrimination in All-pay Contests"

Abstract: Agents with similar skill may differ in their ability to self-promote. We consider the problem of a contest designer who intends to motivate equally productive workers who differ in their ability to win the contest. Full surplus extraction is always possible if the contest can be "unfair" in the sense that it (1) is not anonymous or (2) sometimes fails to award the prize. If the prize is fixed, the optimal contest is an all-pay auction with bid caps. If the designer is allowed to make the prize endogenous, full surplus extraction is possible in an all-pay auction so long as the marginal self-promotion abilities are not fully ranked. In the optimal contest, the player with the better self promotion technology is endogenously offered a lower prize in expectation. Because the contest is symmetric, this discrimination is *covert*.

Languages   English (native)

References

Professor Asher Wolinsky
Department of Economics
Northwestern University
2211 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208
847.491.4415
a-wolinsky@northwestern.edu

Professor Wojciech Olszewski
Department of Economics
Northwestern University
2211 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208
847.491.8482
wo@kellogg.northwestern.edu

Professor Bruno Strulovici
Department of Economics
Northwestern University
2211 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208
847.491.8233
b-strulovici@northwestern.edu