Research Statement
Priyadarshi Amar (Postdoctoral Researcher, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)

I am an applied economist whose research examines institutions and information in developing economies, with a particular empirical focus on South Asia. My work integrates insights from development economics, institutional economics, and behavioral economics to understand how institutional design and information environments shape economic and political outcomes. I employ rigorous causal identification strategies—including randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, and novel administrative data—to study policy-relevant questions about democratic governance, human capital formation, and climate adaptation. My research contributes to our understanding of how institutions can be designed to promote inclusive development and how information interventions can improve decision-making in low-information environments.

Job Market Paper: Countering Misinformation Early

Joint work with Simon Chauchard, Sumitra Badrinathan, and Florian Sichart
Forthcoming at American Political Science Review

Can educational interventions build citizens' capacity to navigate complex information environments and misinformation? This project addresses a major implementation challenge that has significant consequences for individual and social welfare. Governments from Finland to New Jersey are investing millions in classroom media literacy. But the big question remains: does this method to combat misinformation actually work? We test whether sustained educational interventions can build the capacity to comprehend, process, and apply information through the largest media literacy experiment in the world: a randomized controlled trial with more than 13,500 students in 583 villages in Bihar.

Partnering with the state government, we implemented a 14-week information and media literacy curriculum as an official government course. Using village-level randomization, we identify causal effects on information discernment, measured through standardized assessments, attitudes toward scientific health practices, and countering misinformation. The intervention produces substantial and persistent improvements: treated students show 0.32 standard deviation improvements in discerning true from false information that persist four months after treatment, along with improved health decision making (0.21 standard deviation decrease in reliance on alternative medicine).

Most strikingly, we document substantial intergenerational spillovers: Parents of treated students show significant improvements in information discernment without direct treatment. These findings suggest that institutional government-backed solutions can scale and endure, offering hope for education policy and public health strategies to address the misinformation crisis that affects democracies around the world. Our cost-effectiveness analysis shows that the intervention costs approximately \$4.84 per student with benefits that far exceed costs in the health, financial, and civic domains. This research has been recognized with the APSA Experimental Research Section Best Paper Award (2025), APSA Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior Best Paper Award (2025) and received Honorable Mention for the APSA Comparative Politics Section Sage Best Paper Award (2025).

Dissertation Overview: Local Institutions and Political Outcomes

My dissertation examines how local institutional design choices create unintended spillover effects on political participation in developing democracies. Although economists have extensively studied the direct effects of institutions on economic outcomes, we know surprisingly little about how institutional reforms in one domain systematically affect political outcomes in others. This work contributes to institutional economics by developing a framework for understanding these spillovers and their welfare implications.

Focusing on India's village council system, which governs more than 600 million rural citizens and controls substantial budgets for local public goods, my three dissertation papers examine how different institutional design choices create differential effects between social groups, with implications for inclusive economic development. My dissertation has received the *Best Dissertation Prize in Comparative Politics* from UW-Madison (2025) and also, the *Best Dissertation Prize in Diversity, Equity, Justice & Power* from UW-Madison (2025).

Paper 1 - Ethnic Electoral Quotas and Women's Political Participation: This paper examines whether caste-based electoral quotas unintentionally affect women's political participation. Using quasi-experimental variation in quota assignment within village wards and administrative data from 4,800 councils, I find that women's candidacy is 1.5 times higher and electoral success is 2 times higher in seats with caste quotas as compared to open seats (seats without any quotas). I show that the underlying mechanism operates through two channels: first, differential gender norms across caste groups that affect the costs and benefits of political participation and second, distinct political dynamics in quota and non-quota seats, a finding with broader implications for understanding how social-political norms interact with institutional design to shape the participation of women in activities outside of the home.

Paper 2 - Electoral Requirements and Minority Participation: This paper uses a difference-in-differences analysis to examine how electoral eligibility laws (fertility limits for local politicians) differentially affect minority group participation. I find that these ostensibly universal requirements reduce Muslim political candidacy while having minimal effects on other groups, operating through social cost mechanisms that create systematic barriers for marginalized communities. This has implications for understanding how institutional barriers can perpetuate political exclusion.

Paper 3 - Executive Selection and Political Competition: This paper examines how changes in executive selection methods (direct vs. indirect election) affect incentives for legislative participation. Using data from 23,495 village councils, I show that direct election reduces both candidate entry and political competition, with differential effects across social groups. This work contributes to understanding institutional complementarities and their effects on political outcomes.

Other Research

Proxy Leadership and Governance Effectiveness (with Apurva Bamezai and Rithika Kumar, *under review*): Although gender quotas increase women's descriptive representation, questions remain about substantive representation and governance effectiveness. We develop a scalable methodology to measure "proxy leadership" using phone surveys from more than 1,100 local politicians. We find that women politicians are less likely to personally respond to governance surveys and validate this measure against citizen knowledge of their representatives. This research contributes to understanding the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in achieving their intended goals.

Climate Change and Economic Participation (with Patrick Behrer, Anwesha Bhattacharya, Shweta Bhogale, Ting Liu, Bhavya Srivastava and Tanya Vaidya): We examine how extreme weather affects electoral participation, a form of civic engagement with economic implications through its effects on public goods provision. Using polling-day temperature variation across Indian elections, we find that extreme temperatures reduce voter turnout and increase winners' vote margins, suggesting reduced political competition. This research contributes to understanding the economic costs of climate change through its effects on democratic institutions.

Information Transmission and Social Identity (with Chauchard, Badrinathan, and Sichart): Through experimental methods with more than 6,000 participants, we examine how social identities affect information sharing, a process with important implications for market efficiency and social learning. We find systematic discrimination in information transmission. Respondents are less likely to share information from minority sources and penalize minority sources more severely for transmitting false information. These patterns suggest that identity-based discrimination can impede efficient information aggregation in economic and political markets.

Future Research Directions

My future research agenda will expand along three dimensions, each with significant policy relevance.

1. Institutional Design in Development: I plan to extend my institutional spillover framework through comparative work across developing economies, examining how different institutional configurations affect inclusive economic development. This research will inform policy design by identifying when and how institutional reforms achieve their intended welfare effects.

2. Information Economics and Development: Building on my research on misinformation, I will examine how information interventions can address market failures in developing economies. Key questions include: How do improved information environments affect economic decision making? Can information interventions improve the effectiveness of development programs?

3. Climate Adaptation and Institutions: As climate change increasingly affects economic outcomes in developing countries, I will investigate how institutional design can facilitate adaptation. This includes examining how local governance institutions can better respond to climate shocks and how information interventions can improve climate-related decision making.

Through continued focus on rigorous causal identification, original data collection, and policy relevance, this research agenda aims to inform both economic theory and development policy, contributing to more effective institutional design for inclusive economic growth.

Teaching Statement
Priyadarshi Amar (Postdoctoral Researcher, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid)

My teaching journey spans six prestigious institutions across three continents—from the Indian School of Business to Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison, ICPSR Summer Program, University of Mumbai, and Nalanda University. As a teaching assistant, I supported multiple courses that blend economics and quantitative methods: Understanding Political Numbers, an introduction to data analysis and econometric techniques using R (3 semesters); Research Methods focusing on causal inference and statistical analysis for advanced undergraduates (1 semester); Managerial Economics for MBA students covering microeconomic theory and applications (2 semesters); and Game Theory for graduate students exploring strategic interactions and economic behavior (1 semester). My responsibilities included grading assignments, leading weekly recitations, and conducting office hours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I gained experience adapting content and teaching to both synchronous and asynchronous online delivery. Although graduate students do not typically serve as mentors, I participated in the Undergraduate Research Program Mentor program at UW-Madison, guiding students pursuing careers in economics, data analysis, and policy research.

Since completing my PhD, I have taught courses such as Introduction to Data Analysis and R, Mathematics for Social Scientists, and Microeconomics. These positions have provided invaluable experience in curriculum design, lecture delivery, and comprehensive student assessment. This progression from teaching assistant to lead instructor, combined with my work across diverse institutional contexts, has equipped me to effectively teach diverse audiences—from MBA students and undergraduates to graduate students, policymakers, and aspiring economists and researchers.

Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is built on three key pedagogical pillars: active learning, formative assessment, and inclusive teaching—principles I have refined through years of diverse classroom experiences and my commitment to making economics accessible and relevant.

I believe students learn economics more effectively when they actively engage with economic concepts rather than passively absorbing theory. To promote active learning, I use interactive teaching methods, such as developing economic models and graphs on the blackboard, working through mathematical derivations step-by-step, and constructing logical arguments with students. This approach allows students to actively participate by calculating elasticities, deriving equilibrium conditions, and engaging with economic intuition, rather than simply memorizing formulas. In larger classes or online settings, I replace the blackboard with a document camera or interactive slides. My lecture materials, shared before class, include blank spaces for students to work through problem sets and follow along with derivations on their own "canvas." I provide completed solutions after class to ensure no student falls behind while maintaining the challenge of working through problems independently.

I use a variety of active learning techniques tailored to economics education. In smaller classrooms, I facilitate problem-solving sessions where students work through microeconomic optimization problems or macroeconomic policy scenarios. In larger settings, I employ small group discussions around economic case studies, online discussion boards for policy debates, and brief analytical papers examining current economic events. Across all environments, I alternate between theoretical exposition and practical application, incorporating clicker questions on economic concepts, think-pair-share exercises on policy implications, and minute papers reflecting on real-world economic phenomena.

Students learn economics at different paces and through different approaches—some grasp concepts through mathematical formalization while others understand through graphical analysis or real-world applications. I favor formative assessment, distributing varied assignments throughout the course: problem sets that build technical skills, empirical exercises using economic data, policy briefs that apply theory to current issues, and examinations that test both conceptual understanding and analytical ability. This approach provides continuous feedback on student progress while allowing me to adapt my teaching methods based on their learning needs.

Having been an international student myself and now teaching across institutions in India, Europe, and the United States, I understand the importance of creating inclusive environments for economics education. Economics can feel intimidating to students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those who may lack confidence in mathematics or come from different educational systems. I create multiple pathways for participation: office hours for individualized help with mathematical concepts, online forums for discussing economic policy, and collaborative problem-solving sessions that leverage diverse perspectives. When teaching statistics in Mumbai, I noticed students from rural backgrounds brought valuable insights about local markets and economic behavior, even when they initially felt less confident with formal mathematical methods. By incorporating real-world examples from their experiences and providing multiple ways to demonstrate understanding, these students became some of my most engaged learners.

Teaching Versatility and Course Portfolio

My research expertise in development economics, institutional economics, and econometric methods, combined with extensive training in economic theory and quantitative analysis, has prepared me to teach across multiple areas of economics with enthusiasm and competence. I am eager to contribute to both undergraduate and graduate curricula through foundational and specialized courses.

Core Undergraduate Offerings: I am well-prepared to teach essential undergraduate courses, including Principles of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, where I can help students understand fundamental economic concepts through real-world applications and policy examples. My extensive experience with quantitative methods positions me to teach Econometrics and Statistics for Economics, emphasizing hands-on learning with statistical software (R, Stata, Python) and practical applications to economic problems. I am particularly excited to develop courses in Development Economics, exploring how institutions, policies, and market failures shape economic outcomes in developing countries.

Specialized Expertise: My research background enables me to offer focused courses on Institutional Economics, examining how formal and informal institutions affect economic performance and growth. I can teach Political Economy, exploring the intersection of economic and political institutions, and Applied Microeconomics, focusing on empirical methods and policy evaluation. Additionally, I am prepared to teach courses on Information Economics and Behavioral Economics, incorporating insights from my misinformation research and understanding of decision-making in low-information environments.

Graduate-Level Instruction: For graduate students, I can teach comprehensive field courses in Development Economics and Political Economy, offering systematic coverage of theoretical models and empirical methods. I am eager to offer advanced courses in Applied Econometrics, focusing on causal identification strategies including randomized controlled trials, instrumental variables, and difference-in-differences methods that I employ in my own research. My expertise in experimental economics positions me to teach courses on Field Experiments and Program Evaluation.

Methodological Training: Across undergraduate and graduate levels, I am committed to teaching quantitative methods courses, from introductory statistics and econometrics to advanced topics in causal inference and experimental design. I believe strongly in making econometric training accessible and relevant, connecting statistical techniques to substantive economic questions and policy applications. My courses emphasize both theoretical understanding and practical implementation using modern computational tools.

Regional and Applied Focus: My deep knowledge of South Asian economies enables me to offer specialized courses on Economic Development in Asia, providing students with insights into one of the world's most economically dynamic regions. I can also teach courses on the Economics of Inequality, examining causes and consequences of economic disparities, and Public Economics, exploring government intervention in markets and policy design.

Adaptability and Innovation: I am excited to teach beyond my current specializations and develop new courses that meet departmental needs and student interests. Whether adapting existing courses to incorporate recent developments in economic research or creating entirely new offerings that bridge economics with other disciplines, I approach each teaching opportunity with enthusiasm and commitment to pedagogical excellence.

In all courses, my primary goal is to develop students' economic intuition while building their analytical skills. For undergraduates, I emphasize economic reasoning and policy applications while ensuring solid grounding in economic theory. For graduate students, I focus on rigorous theoretical foundations, econometric techniques, and the skills necessary for conducting independent economic research.

Teaching Evaluations and Student Feedback

My teaching effectiveness is documented through both quantitative evaluations and qualitative student feedback across economics-related courses. Evaluations are available for three courses where I served as a teaching assistant: Research Methods in Political Science focusing on causal inference and econometric techniques (UW-Madison, Fall 2019), Understanding Political Numbers emphasizing statistical analysis and data interpretation (UW-Madison, Fall 2020), and Introduction to Python for economic and social science applications (ICPSR, Summer 2023). On a five-point scale, my overall ratings range from 3.75 to 4.625, showing consistent improvement over time. Students appreciated how I made complex econometric concepts understandable, with one Understanding Political Numbers student observing that *"in some ways, he did the best of teaching the content."*

Students consistently highlight my accessibility and support, particularly valuing my office hours where I help clarify econometric methods and work through problem sets—an aspect rated between 4.0 and 4.625 across all courses. This commitment to student support is echoed in their written feedback: *"Whenever I asked a question in discussion, he would ask me at the end of class if I was still confused. This prompted me to seek greater clarity,"* noted one Research Methods student. Another from Understanding Political Numbers stated I was *"very accessible to ask questions"* and *"great at answering questions."* This feedback reflects my belief that economics education requires patient, individualized support as students develop their analytical skills.

My strongest quantitative performance came in the recent ICPSR Python course, where I earned 4.625 for overall teaching and a perfect 5.0 for clarity. This progression demonstrates my growth in pedagogical effectiveness, particularly in making technical material accessible—a crucial skill for teaching econometrics and quantitative methods.

Additional teaching evaluations are unavailable for other courses either due to small class sizes or response rates below institutional reporting thresholds. However, the consistent themes across available evaluations—accessibility, clarity, and genuine concern for student understanding—reflect my core teaching values and commitment to student success in economics education.