

# SAMUEL HIGBEE

samuelhigbee@uchicago.edu – samuelhigbee.github.io – (571) 422-2399

<b>Placement Directors:</b>	Manasi Deshpande	mdeshpande@uchicago.edu	(773) 702-8260
	Evan Rose	ekrose@uchicago.edu	(773) 834-3116
<b>Graduate Administrator:</b>	Kathryn Falzareno	kfalzareno@uchicago.edu	(773) 702-3026

## Office Contact Information

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University of Chicago, Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics  
Saieh Hall for Economics  
5757 S University Ave  
Chicago, IL 60637

## Education

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**University of Chicago**, Ph.D. Economics *2019–present*

**Brigham Young University**, B.S. Mathematics & Economics *2015–2019*

## References

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Professor Stéphane Bonhomme (Chair)  
University of Chicago  
Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics  
sbonhomme@uchicago.edu

Professor Guillaume Pouliot  
University of Chicago  
Harris School of Public Policy  
guillaume pouliot@uchicago.edu

Professor Max Tabord-Meehan  
University of Chicago  
Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics  
maxtm@uchicago.edu

Professor Arun Chandrasekhar  
Stanford University  
Department of Economics  
arungc@stanford.edu

## Research and Teaching Fields

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Primary: Econometrics  
Secondary: Applied microeconomics

## Job Market Paper

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### Experimental Design for Policy Choice

I study how to design experiments for the objective of choosing optimal policies. An experimenter wants to choose a policy to maximize welfare subject to budget or other policy constraints, but first has the opportunity to conduct an experiment to learn about the optimal policy. The joint experimental design and policy choice problem is a dynamic optimization problem with a very high-dimensional state space, since the chosen policy depends on the realized experimental data. We propose a tractable low-dimensional approximation to the problem which depends only on posterior estimates of the marginal effect of the policy, and show this approximation yields an asymptotically optimal experiment and policy. The method applies to policies allocating discrete as well as continuous treatments, such as cash transfers, prices, or tax credits, and also allows targeting the policy based on covariates. We demonstrate the method using the conditional cash transfer program Progresa, showing how to design an experiment to help choose a policy aimed at increasing graduation rates and reducing gender disparities in education. Compared to the original Progresa experiment, the optimal experiment requires only one quarter as many observations to obtain equally effective policies.

## Working Papers

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### Policy Learning with New Treatments

*Revision requested at Quantitative Economics*

I study the problem of a decision maker choosing a policy to allocate treatment to a heterogeneous population on the basis of experimental data that includes only a subset of possible treatment values. The effects of new treatments are partially identified based on shape restrictions on treatment response. I propose solving an empirical minimax regret problem to estimate the policy and show it has a tractable linear- and integer-programming formulation. I prove the maximum regret of the estimator converges to the lowest possible maximum regret at the rate at which heterogeneous treatment effects can be estimated in the experimental data or  $n^{-1/2}$ , whichever is slower. I apply my results to design targeted subsidies for electrical grid connections in rural Kenya, and estimate that 97% of the population should be given a treatment not implemented in the experiment.

## Work in Progress

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### Distributionally Robust Optimal Transport

*with Omkar Katta & Guillaume Pouliot*

Many partially identified parameters in program evaluation settings are instances of the general Fréchet problem of bounding a functional of a joint distribution when only its marginals are observed. A leading example is the distribution of treatment effects. Using data on covariates can tighten the identified set, but doing so nonparametrically is difficult in practice. We propose a distributionally robust optimal transport framework for inference on the solution to the Fréchet problem which nonparametrically incorporates covariate data and show it delivers valid inference on these parameters. We show our infinite-dimensional distributionally robust optimal transport problem has a finite-dimensional linear programming formulation, facilitating computation.

## Conference Presentations

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- 2024:** Econometrics Junior Conference (University of Notre Dame)  
Brigham Young University Graduate Student Conference (Provo, UT)  
ASSA Winter Meeting (San Antonio, TX)
- 2023:** Chicago Student Causal Inference Conference (University of Chicago)  
Economics Graduate Student Conference (Washington University in St. Louis)  
Optimization-Conscious Econometrics Conference (University of Chicago)
- 2022:** Delhi School of Economics Winter School (Delhi, India)  
Brigham Young University Graduate Student Conference (Provo, UT)

## Awards, Scholarships, and Grants

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Rosen Memorial Fellowship	2024-2025
Roswell & Mary McKeon Whitman Scholarship	2024-2025
Martin & Margaret Lee Prize (high score on microeconomics core exam)	2020
University of Chicago Social Sciences Division Fellowship	2019-2024
Thomas S. Monson Presidential Scholarship	2015-2019

## Teaching Experience

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Optimization-Conscious Econometrics (PhD) TA for Prof. Guillaume Pouliot	<i>Spring 2023</i>
Econometrics (undergraduate) TA for Prof. Max Tabord-Meehan	<i>Winter 2023, Spring 2022</i>
Topics on the Analysis of Randomized Experiments (PhD) TA for Prof. Max Tabord-Meehan	<i>Winter 2022</i>
Applied Regression Analysis (MBA) TA for Prof. Max Farrell	<i>Fall 2021</i>
Empirical Analysis III (PhD) TA for Prof. James Heckman	<i>Spring 2021</i>

## Service

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Organizer of Semiparametrics Reading Group, University of Chicago	<i>2023</i>
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## Research Experience and Other Employment

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Research Assistant for Prof. Lars Lefgren, Brigham Young University	<i>2017–2019</i>
Consulting Research Assistant, LSAC	<i>2018–2019</i>

## Additional Information

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<b>Citizenship</b>	USA
<b>Programming Skills</b>	Julia, R, Python, Git
<b>Languages</b>	English (Native)