EKT 816: Econometrics

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Course Description

This is a graduate course in econometrics. Our goal is to learn some basic techniques that economists use to establish causal claims. An immediate payoff is that you will be able to read and evaluate empirical research. You may also find these methods useful in your own work.

Prerequisites

You need a working knowledge of calculus and linear algebra. Previous exposure to statistics is helpful but not essential.

Required Texts

There are two required texts:

- Angrist and Pischke (2008)
- Paarsch and Golyaev (2016)

Although we will not refer explicitly to Paarsch and Golyaev (2016) often, it will be useful for the computational parts of the course (and indeed for those parts of your own research that require computation).

You may also find it useful to refer to these texts:

- Stachurski (2016)
- Wooldridge (2010)
- Deaton (1997)
- Cameron and Trivedi (2005)

Of these, Deaton (1997) is available for free in PDF format from the World Bank's website, and Stachurski has posted many lecture slides and other supporting materials to his website.

Assessment

There will be 8 problem sets, a take-home exam, and a midterm (also take-home).

Class Schedule

Please read at least the prescribed readings before class, even if you find it hard to follow everything; it makes for a more productive discussion if you have figured out the easy stuff first.

You may find it helpful to pattern your notes on the readings after a referee report; Berk, Harvey, and Hirshleifer (2017) and Berk, Harvey, and Hirshleifer (2015) is a useful guide to the requirements of this important type of professional communication.

Week 01, 02/04 - 02/08: Probability and Statistics Review; Introduction to R

Distributions, expectations, quantiles. Laws of large numbers and the central limit theorem. Estimation: mean square error vs bias. Sufficient and ancilliary statistics.

Week 02, 02/11 - 02/15: Probability and Statistics Review (continued)

Consistency and precision in estimation. Weighting and sample design. Identification. Hypothesis testing: size vs power.

Week 03, 02/18 - 02/22: Counterfactuals and Causal Inference

Potential outcomes notation. Randomization delivers the ATE; brief aside on SUTVA, peer effects and general equilibrium. Examples of causal claims. Internal and external validity, and the value of understanding mechanisms. The importance of a clear research design. Another aside on partial identification and "structural estimation". Prediction vs causation.

Required Readings

- Angrist and Krueger (1999); DiNardo and Lee (2011)
- Heckman and Smith (1995); Card, Della Vigna, and Malmendier (2011);
- Aron-Dine, Einav, and Finkelstein (2012); Muralidharan and Niehaus (2017)
- Angrist and Pischke (2010); Keane (2010b); Keane (2010a)
- Goldberger (1972)
- Heckman and Vytlacil (2007a)
- Imbens and Wooldridge (2009); Heckman (2010)

Optional Readings

- Acemoglu (2010)
- Heckman (2008); Sims (2010);
- Deaton (2010); Imbens (2010)
- Manski (1995)
- Mullainathan and Spiess (2017)

Week 04, 02/25 - 03/01: Linear Regression

Derivation of the OLS formula; Frisch-Waugh-Lovell theorem. Implications for interpreting regression output. Conditional expectations and best linear predictors. Typical violations of conditional independence: simultaneity, measurement error, self-selection. Applications: growth accounting and labor market discrimination.

Required Readings

- Bound, Brown, and Mathiowetz (2001)
- Meyer, Mok, and Sullivan (2015); Griliches (1986)
- Neal and Johnson (1996)
- Altonji and Blank (1999)
- Topel (1999); Barro (1999)
- Bazzi and Clemens (2013)

Week 05, 03/04 - 03/08: Matching and Inverse Probability Weighting

Basic similarities between matching and regression: matching methods aim for unweighted averages of treatment-control differences, while regression weights by the variance of P(D=1|X). Applications to the evaluation of job training programs.

Required Readings

- Kline (2011); see also the slides on Kline's website.
- Dehejia and Wahba (1999); Dehejia and Wahba (2002)
- Smith and Todd (2005); Dehejia (2005)
- Imbens (2015)
- Solon, Haider, and Wooldridge (2015)

Optional Readings

- LaLonde (1986); LaLonde (1995)
- Heckman, LaLonde, and Smith (1999)

Week 06, 03/11 - 03/15: Instrumental Variables with Homogenous Treatment Effects

Just-identified IV; 2SLS and GMM. Identification and (asymptotic) inference. Applications to the effects of Catholic schooling, the effects of childbearing on labor supply, and the returns to education.

Required Readings

- Neal (1997); Altonji, Elder, and Taber (2005); Angrist (2001)
- Oster (2017)
- Angrist (1990); Angrist and Evans (1998)

Optional Readings

- Angrist, Graddy, and Imbens (2000); Graddy (2006)
- Heckman, Lochner, and Todd (2006)
- Card (1999); Card (2001)

Week 07, 03/18 - 03/22: Weak Instruments; GMM; Selection Models (Part I)

2SLS bias; misleading inference with weak instruments. LIML. Outcome and selection equations in the "Generalized Roy Model". Varieties of treatment effects.

Required Readings

- Bound, Jaeger, and Baker (1995)
- Stock (2010)
- Andrews, Stock, and Sun (2018)
- Heckman (1990); Eisenhauer, Heckman, and Vytlacil (2015)
- Heckman and Honore (1990)

Week 08, 03/25 - 03/29: Autumn Break

No class; I will post a take-home midterm before the break.

Week 09, 04/01 - 04/05: Selection Models (Part II); Marginal Treatment Effects and LATE

What does IV estimate under essential heterogeneity? Deriving the IV weights. Violations of "monotonicity".

Required Readings

- Heckman, Urzua, and Vytlacil (2006)
- Heckman and Vytlacil (2007b)
- Kline and Walters (2019)
- Das, Newey, and Vella (2003)

Optional Readings

- Chyn (2018)
- Mueller-Smith (2015)
- Arnold, Dobbie, and Yang (2018)

Week 10, 04/08 - 04/12: Applications; MTEs and LATE in Practice

Semiparametric approaches to control funtion estimation. Partial equivalence to IV. Richer treatment spaces: ordered and unordered selection. Applications.

Required Readings

- Cornelissen et al. (2016)
- Wooldridge (2015)

Optional Readings

- Bazzi (2017)
- Llull (2018)
- Cornelissen et al. (2018)
- Amiti and Davis (2012)
- Carneiro, Heckman, and Vytlacil (2011)

Week 11, 04/15 - 04/19: Synthetic Panels and Diff-in-Diff

An additively separable model for Y_0 and the parallel trends assumption. Pitfalls: heterogeneous trends and serially correlated shocks. Placebo tests and placebo outcomes (DDD); clustering and bootstrapping standard errors.

Required Readings

- Garthwaite, Gross, and Notowidigdo (2014)
- Kearney and Levine (2015); Jaeger and Joyce (2018); Kahn-Lang and Lang (2018)
- Goodman-Bacon (2018)
- Cameron and Miller (2015)
- Abadie et al. (2017)

Optional Readings

- Hornbeck (2010); Hornbeck and Naidu (2014)
- Malkova (2018)
- Duflo (2001)
- Cunningham and Shah (2018)
- Muralidharan and Prakash (2017)

Week 12, 04/22 - 04/26: Individual-Level Panel Data (Part I)

The incidental parameters problem (again). Complications: lagged dependent variables and serial correlation. Applications to the effects of job loss on workers and life-cycle labor supply.

Required Readings

- Ashenfelter and Card (1985)
- MaCurdy (1981)
- Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (1993)
- Griliches and Hausman (1986)

Optional Readings

- Diamond, McQuade, and Qian (2018)
- MaCurdy (2007)
- Topel (1991); Acemoglu and Pischke (1999)

Week 13, 04/29 - 05/03: Individual-Level Panel Data, Part II - Mover Designs

Wide-panel vs long-panel asymptotics. Multiple unordered treatments in the selection equation. Applications to medical spending and worker-firm matching.

Required Readings

- Finkelstein, Gentzkow, and Williams (2016)
- Finkelstein, Gentzkow, and Williams (2018)
- Hull (2018)

Optional Readings

- Abowd, Kramarz, and Margolis (1999)
- Borovičková and Shimer (2017)
- Song et al. (2018)
- Heckman and Pinto (2018)

Week 14, 05/06 - 05/10: Individual-Level Panel Data, Part III - Event Studies

"Dynamic treatment effects" and long-panel asymptotics. Applications to local differences in retail prices and human capital accumulation over the life-cycle.

Required Readings

- Kleven, Landais, and Sogaard (2018)
- Abraham and Sun (2018)
- Borusyak and Jaravel (2016)
- Schulhofer-Wohl (2018)

Optional Readings

- Allcott et al. (2018)
- Lagakos et al. (2018b); Lagakos et al. (2018a)
- Hendricks (2002); Hendricks and Schoellman (2018)
- Atkin (2016)
- Atkin, Faber, and Gonzalez-Navarro (2018)

Week 15, 05/13 - 05/17: Discussion of Applied Papers

Student discussion of applied papers.

Week 16, 05/20 - 05/24: Discussion of Applied Papers

Student discussion of applied papers.

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