Seminar Public Economics 2, Winter Term 2020/21

Prof. Buettner/Prof. Rincke/Prof. Wrede

Course Description:

During the seminar, participants will discuss a broad range of topics. A first set of topics address questions related to spatial and public economics (Prof. Wrede). A second set relates to public economics and behavioral economics (Prof. Rincke). Finally, the seminar also deals with public economics (Prof. Büttner). The list of topics below provides more details, including references and brief comments on the research questions covered in the respective literature.

The seminar has two consecutive parts. In the first part, students write a thesis (15 pages) under the guidance of their advisor. In an introductory session, students learn about the principles of scientific work and the scope of analysis that is expected. The thesis elaborates on the literature (see the list of topics for the main article(s) to be covered). Students are expected to search for additional literature and then work independently on their topic. Advisors provide close guidance during this process. The deadline to hand in the thesis is January 11, 2021. The second part consists of a seminar (January 28/29, 2021, two half-days) of students’ presentations (most likely via ZOOM). Before preparing their presentations, supervisors will provide students with detailed feedback on their thesis. During the seminar students present their thesis. Each presenter has 25 minutes for her/his presentation, followed by 25 minutes of discussion.

Organisational details and grading:

- The seminar is jointly organized by the chairs of Prof. Buettner, Prof. Rincke, and Prof. Wrede.
- Students who want to participate should express their interest by submitting a participation form (see webpage of Prof. Rincke’s chair) to david.hardt@fau.de until August 3, 2020.
- Please indicate your preferred topics. Preference will be given to the earliest submissions.
- After being assigned to a specific topic, students can repeal their participation within a week’s time. After that deadline has passed, participation in the seminar is mandatory. Students not handing in a thesis in time will be graded a 5.0.
- Please note that the maximum number of participants is 10 students.
- Additional information on how to write a seminar paper, how to search for literature, etc. will be provided in an introductory session.
- Grading: The overall grade will reflect the quality of the thesis (50%), the presentation in the seminar (30%), and the student’s contributions to the discussion following each of the presentations (20%).
List of Topics

Block 1: Spatial and public economics (Prof. Wrede)

1. Wealth taxation and wealth accumulation

Q: How do wealth taxes affect wealth accumulation?


2. Optimal spatial policy and sorting

Q: Does the economy benefit from a reallocation of (high-skilled) workers to currently low-wage cities and smaller cities?


3. Persistence of locally concentrated income shocks

Q: How do geographically concentrated income shocks influence the long-run spatial distribution of poverty within a city?


4. Tipping points and effects of segregation

Q: How does neighborhood ethnic population composition affect the short- and long-run education and labor market outcomes of natives and immigrants?

5. Microenterprise Training in Developing Countries: Mentors or Teachers? (n.a.)

Q: Does training by successful entrepreneurs help microenterprise owners in developing countries to grow their businesses? What kind of support is most effective?


6. Virtual Classrooms: How Online College Courses Affect Student Success (n.a.)

Q: How effective is online teaching relative to in-person classes?


7. Female Role Models and Gender Differences in the Choice of Major (n.a.)

Q: In some disciplines, there is a big gender difference in the choice of major. Do female role models affect the behavior of students regarding the choice of major?


8. Teacher Salaries and Student Outcomes in Developing Countries (n.a.)

Q: It is often claimed that insufficient pay contributes to students in developing countries performing poorly in academic tests. Does increasing teacher salaries help to solve the problem?

9. Government performance – the role of politicians  (n.a.)

Q: Does higher remuneration of public officials improve government performance?


10. The prevention of VAT fraud  (n.a.)

Q: What are the pros and cons of reverse charging in tackling VAT fraud?


11. Pricing externalities – the case of public roads  (n.a.)

Q: Are congestion charges effective in correcting externalities associated with road usage?


12. Fiscal rules  (n.a.)

Q: What are the effects of constitutional-level balanced budget rules on fiscal outcomes?