

Randomized Experiments in Education

University of Zurich

Spring Term 2012
May 7th - 11th, 2012

Instructor: Prof. Eric P. Bettinger, Ph.D., Stanford University

Course description

The use of randomized experiments in education has become increasingly popular and prevalent in educational research. The US Department of Education has labeled randomized experiments as the “gold standard” in educational research. The World Bank often requires developing countries to use randomization in determining the assignment and use of new educational innovations.

This course focuses on the methodology of randomization in educational research. We focus on questions surrounding the use of randomization. Why is randomization so compelling? What assumptions are inherent in randomized designs? What are the hidden challenges to randomization? Is randomization always the “best” empirical strategy? How does one design randomized experiments? Is clustering a problem to randomization?

The focus on the course is developing a framework for thinking about randomized experiments. This framework will form the base of subsequent methodology courses which extend the concepts from the class. We also focus extensively on the statistical models and inherent assumptions underlying randomization. The goal is that individuals will be conversant about randomized experiments and have the basic tools to plan and to conduct randomized experiments.

Target audience and preconditions for participation

The seminar is particularly designed for doctoral students in economics of education. Doctoral students in economics or business economics with a strong interest in randomized experiments are welcome as well. The seminar will take place en bloc in order to enable external Ph.D. students to attend.

Credit Requirements

1. Full course attendance. Students are expected to come prepared to class. It will facilitate discussion and improve overall learning.
2. At the end of the course students will be asked to complete a take-home exam which is to be handed in 3 weeks after the end of the course. The work is to be done individually.

Application

The number of participants is limited. Please send your application including a short CV to Yvonne Oswald (yvonne.oswald@business.uzh.ch) latest by **Friday, March 16th, 2012**. For further details and questions please contact Yvonne Oswald; 0041 44 634 42 76.