Advanced research design
1st term seminar
Prof. Fabrizio Bernardi and Prof. Diego Gambetta

Fall 2013
(20 credits)

Tuesdays 17:00-19:00 – Seminar room 2

Please register with adele.battistini@eui.eu

This course is for second year researchers, especially those who have developed causal hypotheses in their proposal and want to learn about some of the ways to put them to the test. The course touches on a series of designs suitable for identifying causal relations, from the queen technique—experiments—to second best options—natural experiments, discontinuity, panel studies, etc. The readings include many applications of these techniques aimed at spurring participants’ imagination.


Classes and topics:
- Week 2: problems of causal identification [22 Oct]
- Week 3: experiments [29 Oct, Matthias Sutter]
- Week 4: natural experiments [5 Nov]
- Week 5: instrumental variables [12 Nov]
- Week 6: difference in difference [19 Nov, Salvatore Sberna]
- Week 7: regression discontinuity [22 Nov]
- Week 8: panel and fixed effects [26 Nov]
- Week 9: twins and siblings [3 Dec]
- Week 10: concluding session [6 Dec]

In order to obtain the 20 credits participants, in addition to attending, are required:

1) to give a class presentation EITHER on their own research design if this employs one of the techniques discussed in the course, OR on one of these techniques as described in the readings; in the latter case, the researchers should try to develop ideas on how a particular technique might help them in their own research.

2) from Week 3 onward, to prepare brief comments on at least two of the recommended readings for each session. These comments should contain participants’ suggestions for further applications of the technique presented in each week’s readings to different research questions. These comments should be posted on the course folder before 8.00 p.m. the night before the class. A selection of these comments will be discussed in class.
Week 1, 8 October: brief history of cause-seeking designs and organisation of the course


Durkheim E. 1897. Suicide. [The whole book is a great read fully relying on implications which can be derived from various conjectures on what might be causes of suicide; read especially chapter 4, on Imitation] [In the original French the book can be found here http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/40489; in English here http://archive.org/details/suicidestudyinso00durk]
Week 2, 22 October: Problems of causal identification


[the above article is discussed by several authors here: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/some.2008.38.issue-1/issuetoc]

Laitin David, Joachim Moortgatb, and Amanda Lea Robinson, 2012. Geographic axes and the persistence of cultural diversity, PNAS, 109, 26


Beware of being driven by data availability! See these two blogs:

http://themonkeycage.org/2013/06/14/is-theory-getting-lost-in-the-identification-revolution

Week 3, 29 October: Experiments


Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [sections 1.3.2 and 1.5; and chapter 2]


Other readings


Week 4, 5 November: Natural experiments

Legewie, J. unpublished, Terrorist events and attitudes toward immigrants: A Natural Experiment [link]


Other readings


Sekhon, J. and Tituinik, R. 2012. When natural experiments are neither natural nor Experiments, American Political Science Review.

Week 5, 12 November: Instrumental variables


Other readings


Not to forget a cartoon: http://www.manucartoons.com/manucartoons/%22Irrational_agents%22_series/Pages/Genesis_of_War..Part_I_%28HeloMag..February_2010%29.html#26
Week 6, 19 November: Difference in difference


Elisabetta Olivieri, Salvatore Sberna “‘Set the night on fire!’ Mafia Violence and Election in Italy” [working paper]


Week 7, 22 November: Regression discontinuity


Meyersson E. "Islamic Rule and the Empowerment of the Poor and pious" (forthcoming, *Econometrica*)

*Other readings*


Week 8, 26 November: Panel and fixed effects


*Other readings*

Week 9, 3 December: twins and twins

For an overview: Firembaugh, G. 131-145


**Other readings**


Additional readings
