DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS BONN

BONN ECON NEWS

December 1–5, 2025

Overview

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Workshops and seminars

Monday, December 1, 2024

Econometrics & Statistics Seminar

Haoge Chang (Columbia University)	"Randomization-Based Confidence Sets for the Local Average Treatment Effect"
Time 15:00–16:00 CET Online/Hybrid Zoom link will be provided on https://www.econ.uni-bonn.de/ifs/en/seminars/econometrics-statistics-seminar-ws2025-26/seminar-chang	Abstract & Title TBA

Tuesday, December 2, 2024

BGSE Brown Bag Seminar (Applied Microeconomics)

Dyuti Chatterjee (University of Bonn)	"Effects of a Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme on Son Preference"
Time 13:15–14:00 CET Location ECONtribute, Conference Room, Niebuhrstraße 5	Abstract I examine "Kanyashree Prakalpa," a conditional cash transfer program launched in West Bengal, India. The program provides adolescent girls with an annual money transfer on the condition that they remain in school and unmarried between the ages of 13 and 18. Using a difference-in-differences framework to compare beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries within West Bengal and its neighboring states, I estimate the program's impact on the desirability of girl children, a measure that has historically been low in India. This analysis seeks to identify whether financial incentives targeting girls' education and delayed marriage can shift the population's preferences toward daughters.

Bonn Applied Microeconomics Workshop (CRC TR 224 Seminar)

Clara Sievert (CERGE-EI)	"Supernatural Beliefs about Illness and the Use of Modern Medicine: Evidence from the DR Congo"

Time
14:15–15:45 CET

Location
ECONtribute, Conference Room, Niebuhrstraße 5

Abstract
In many societies around the world, individuals attribute illness to supernatural forces such as spirits, curses, or divine punishment. Despite rich qualitative documentation, systematic empirical evidence on the prevalence, behavioral consequences, and adaptability of supernatural illness beliefs remains scarce. In a first step, I use publicly available survey data from sub-Saharan Africa and newly collected survey data from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to document that supernatural illness beliefs are widespread: 94% of respondents in the DRC attribute at least one illness to supernatural causes, with large variation across illnesses. These beliefs matter: they are associated with lower perceived efficacy of modern medicine, lower use of modern medicine, and higher stigma toward those with certain illnesses. In a second step, I conduct a field experiment in the DRC to test whether such beliefs can shift. I randomize exposure to an informational video about the biomedical causes and treatment of epilepsy, a prevalent condition most commonly attributed to supernatural causes. The intervention shifts respondents' beliefs away from supernatural explanations and toward modern medicine's effectiveness, not only for epilepsy but also for other illnesses. It increases take-up of free hospital consultations for epilepsy by 50% and reduces stigma toward those with the condition. Taken together, I give causal evidence that supernatural illness beliefs form an internally coherent, yet adaptable explanatory framework that links perceived cause to treatment and social response, and connects beliefs across illnesses.

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

BGSE Micro Workshop

Stylianos Fragkiskos Skavdis (University of Bonn)	"The Political Economy of Liberal Democracy"

Time
12:00–13:mm CET

Location
Juridicum, Reinhard Selten Room (0.017)

Abstract
The rise of right-wing populism is the defining feature of contemporary Western politics. I argue that its main driver is a persistent representation gap on immigration: political elites have for long favored more permissive immigration policies than voters. As immigration levels increased, this gap became increasingly salient, leading more voters to support right-wing populist parties. Existing political-economy models cannot account for this, as they predict policy convergence when voter demand shifts. I develop a model with a median voter, a median elite member, and two political candidates who can credibly commit to policies. Candidates value both winning office and securing elite endorsement. When voter and elite preferences are close, voters "trust" the elite, and both candidates converge to the elite's preferred policy. When preferences diverge, candidates likely differentiate, enabling populist challengers. This explains both long-standing elite–voter misalignment on immigration and the recent rise of right-populist parties. A second model of delegation shows why populists, once elected, attack independent institutions: populists are typically further from agency preferences than mainstream parties and therefore have stronger incentives to erode agency autonomy.

BGSE Micro Workshop

Wenjun Zheng (University of Bonn)	"Robust Optimal Insurance under Moral Hazard"

Coauthor(s)
List of names

Time
12:00–13:mm CET

Location
Juridicum, Reinhard Selten Room (0.017)

Abstract
We study the robust insurance design problem under moral hazard: a risk-averse policyholder can exert effort to influence the distribution of loss. The principal, however, knows only a subset of actions (hereafter, known actions) that can be taken by the agent and wishes to obtain the best payoff guarantee (max–min profit). We show that the individual rationality constraint plays a crucial role here: under standard IR constraint, the only contract that guarantees non-negative max-min profit is no insurance. Under a weaker IR constraint, which requires that the agent's expected utility with insurance be weakly higher than under no insurance for all known actions, we characterize the optimal maxmin insurance policy: the optimal contract is either full insurance or a contract that induces affine payoffs for the firm and the agent, where the affine contract features the optimal contract obtained in Carroll (2015).

CASFI Seminar (Macro/Econometrics/Finance)

Giancarlo Corsetti (European University Institute)	"Title"
Time 12:00–13:15 CET Location Juridicum, Faculty Meeting Room (U1.040)	Abstract TBA

Inaugural lecture by Prof. Benjamin Born

Benjamin Born (University of Bonn)	"Household and Firm Surveys in Macroeconomic Policy Analysis"
Time 16:15–17:00 CET Location Main Building Uni Bonn,1st floor, Lecture Hall VII	Abstract This talk introduces the growing use of household and firm surveys in macroeconomic analysis. It covers two applications: the consumption effects of Germany's 2020 temporary VAT cut using the Bundesbank Household Survey, and the interest-rate sensitivity of German firms using the ifo Business Survey.

Micro Theory Seminar

Alexander Frankel (University of Chicago)	"Correlation Games"
Coauthor Emir Kamenica Time 16:30–17:45 CET Location Juridicum, Faculty Meeting Room (U1.040)	Abstract We introduce a model of flexible information acquisition in two-person games. We focus on the incentives to acquire information that is positively or negatively correlated with that of the other player. The (sign and extent of) correlation can arbitrarily differ state-by-state. In states where a player views actions as complements, she seeks information that is most-positively correlated with the other player's. In states where a player views actions as substitutes, she seeks information that is most-negatively correlated. These observations help characterize pure-strategy equilibria. In any game, however, there is a mixed-strategy equilibrium where the players' information is conditionally independent.