

Swiss Leading House

Economics of Education, Firm Behaviour and Training Policies



Co-Director
Prof. Dr. Uschi Backes-Gellner



Co-Director
Prof. Dr. Stefan C. Wolter

Spring Term 2025

<p style="text-align: center;">Leading House PH.D. Course Natural Experiments for causality analysis in economics of education - Syllabus -</p>

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dinand Webbink, Erasmus School of Economics Rotterdam;
Tinbergen Institute; CPB; IZA, Bonn; ROA, Maastricht

Workshop dates: June 23-27, 2025

Location: University of Zurich, Room tba

Preliminary Schedule: The lectures take place in the form of an intensive 5-day course.

Monday, June 23:	14:00-18:00
Tuesday, June 24:	09:00-18:00
Wednesday, June 25:	09:00-18:00
Thursday, June 26:	09:00-18:00
Friday, June 27:	09:00-12:00

Module Number; ECTS: tba; 3 ECTS

Course webpage: tba

Course overview

In the last decades a wave of new studies has emerged on the effects of educational interventions on student performance. These studies exploit exogenous variation in interventions in education produced by controlled or natural experiments. This new approach for identifying causal effects in education has recently been labelled as “the credibility revolution” in econometrics. The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the main methods from this approach for obtaining credible estimates. Topics include natural experiments, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity models, difference-in-differences models and matching models. These methods will be discussed and applied using many examples from the recent literature. By the end of the lectures students should have a firm grasp of the type of research designs that can lead to convincing analysis. In addition, they should be able to assess the credibility of empirical research projects. The course comprises eight units: The sessions consist of a combination of teaching, students’ presentations and discussions.

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Key literature

Angrist, J.D and J Pischke, (2010) The credibility revolution in empirical economics: How better research design is taking the con of out econometrics, **Journal of Economic Perspectives**, 24 (2), 3-30.

Currie, J., H. Kleven and E. Zwiars (2020) Technology and big data are changing economics: Mining text to track methods, **AEA Papers and proceedings**, 110: 42-48.

Selected articles from the recent literature on the economics of education.

Target audience and preconditions for participation

The course is particularly designed for doctoral students in economics of education. Doctoral students in economics or business economics with a strong interest in personality traits, non-cognitive skills and education are welcome as well.

Credit Requirements

1. Full course attendance.
2. During the course recent applications of the new methods will be discussed. Students will be asked to present the main lines of an assigned paper or to prepare a short discussion on the research design applied in the paper. Students should prepare presentations which last 10 to 15 minutes. Presentations should be analytical and critical, rather than just descriptive. Students are asked to assess various elements of the paper: question, data, identification strategy, results, sensitivity analysis, conclusions.
3. Students will also be given assignments aimed at finding potential applications of the research designs from the lectures. These assignments will be discussed in class.
4. At the end of the course students will be asked to write a proposal for the evaluation of an educational intervention or policy. A report is expected of approximately 3 pages. The report should be sent within 3 weeks after the end of the course.

Application

The number of participants is limited. Please send your application including a short CV to Aranya Sritharan (aranya.sritharan@business.uzh.ch) at the latest by **May 9, 2025**.

WWF Statutory Course Policies

According to WWF study regulations, all exam dates are final as published in the VVZ and syllabus. This means that final exam dates are not negotiable. It will not be possible to take any exams on different dates.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating or engaging in unethical behavior will be reported to the Dean's office according to the guidelines on academic dishonesty set forth by the University of Zurich.

The information in this syllabus supports the official information in the electronic university registration tool (VVZ-Vorlesungsverzeichnis). In cases of doubt, the official information in the VVZ is decisive.

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For UZH students: Don't forget to officially register using the registration tool of the University of Zurich.

Any work presented by students only uses aids that are declared. Students accept full liability for the scientific integrity of their texts, irrespective of potential use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or other. All instances of direct quotes or paraphrasing from published or unpublished sources have to be properly attributed. You confirm that all work, in its current form or any similar version, has not been previously submitted, in whole or in part, as part of any other examination.