

Behavioral field experiments
University of Göttingen
November 24, 26 & 27, 2015

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1 Course overview

This short course will provide a birds-eye view of some of the literature on behavioral field experiments. It is by no means comprehensive or intended to be a substitute for a full course on behavioral economics, behavioral game theory, experimental economics, field experiments, or development economics.

In lieu of such a course, I partition the reading list into required and additional readings. The latter (and the references within) will not be discussed in the course, but are highly advised if you plan to conduct research using behavioral field experiments.

This syllabus is a tentative plan; deviations will likely be necessary due to time constraints.

2 Course location

The lectures will take place in room 8.136 in the “Blue Tower” at the University of Göttingen.

Office hours will take place in the same building. I will announce the room number once the course takes place.

3 Course schedule

Tuesday, November 24

- 12:15 – 12:45 Terminology, definitions, and taxonomy
- 12:45 – 13:15 Methodological issues: elicitation, demand effects, Hawthorne, power, etc.
- 13:15 – 13:45 Puritan issues: pre-analysis plans, IRBs, deception, etc.
- 14:00 – 15:00 Office hours

Thursday, November 26

- 12:15 – 12:45 Lablike field experiments (LFEs): incentives, framing, protocol, etc.
- 12:45 – 13:15 LFEs: internal validity
- 13:15 – 13:45 LFEs: external validity (Camerer-List debate)
- 14:00 – 15:00 Office hours

Friday, November 27

- 09:45 – 10:15 Randomized controlled trials (RCTs): implementing partners and spillovers
- 10:15 – 10:45 RCTs: internal validity, compliance, balancedness
- 10:45 – 11:15 RCTs: external validity (Deaton-Duflo-Imbens debate)
- 11:30 – 12:30 Office hours

- 13:45 – 14:15 Ways forward: Multiple experiments, lasting impacts, behavioral dimensions
- 14:15 – 14:45 Ways forward: reduced form + structural, non-choice data (neuro, biometric)
- 14:45 – 15:15 Ways forward: Publication stories and strategies
- 15:30 – 16:30 Office hours

4 Required readings (in alphabetical order)

1. Coffman, L. C., and M. Niederle. 2015. “Pre-analysis Plans Have Limited Upside, Especially Where Replications Are Feasible.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29 (3), 81-98.
2. Duflo, E., R. Glennerster, and M. Kremer. 2007. “Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit.” In *Handbook of Development Economics*, ed. T. P. Schultz and J. Strauss. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science. Download from <http://economics.mit.edu/files/806>.
3. Harrison, Glenn W., and John A. List. 2004. “Field Experiments.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 42 (4), 1009–1055.
4. The following *Journal of Economic Literature* symposium:
<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/jel.48.2>.
5. Viceisza, A. C. G. 2012. *Treating the field as a lab: A basic guide to conducting economics experiments for policymaking*. Food Security in Practice Technical Guide 7, Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute. Download from my website.
6. Viceisza, A. C. G. 2015. “Creating a Lab in the Field: Economics Experiments for Policymaking.” *Journal of Economic Surveys (forthcoming)*. Download from <https://goo.gl/FIWYP3>.

5 Additional readings (incomplete and random order)

1. Kahneman, D. and A. Tversky. 1979. "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk." *Econometrica* 47 (2): 263-292.
2. Barberis, N. C. 2013. "Thirty Years of Prospect Theory in Economics: A Review and Assessment." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27 (1): 173-96.
3. Harrison, G. and L. Rutstrom. "Expected utility theory and prospect theory: one wedding and a decent funeral." *Experimental economics* 12 (2): 133-158.
4. Charness, G. and A. C. G. Viceisza. 2015. "Comprehension and Risk Elicitation in the Field: Evidence from Rural Senegal." *Review of Behavioral Economics (forthcoming)*.
5. Laibson, D. 1997. "Golden Eggs and Hyperbolic Discounting." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112 (2): 443-477.
6. Frederick, S., Loewenstein, G. and T. O'Donoghue. 2002. "Time Discounting and Time Preference: A Critical Review." *Journal of Economic Literature* 40 (2): 351-401.
7. Andersen, S., G. W. Harrison, M. I. Lau, and E. E. Rutström. 2008. "Eliciting Risk and Time Preferences." *Econometrica* 76 (3): 583-618.
8. Ashraf, N., D. Karlan, and W. Yin. 2006. "Tying Odysseus to the mast: Evidence from a commitment savings product in the Philippines." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 121 (2): 635-672.
9. Rabin, M., and D. Vayanos. 2010. "The Gambler's and Hot-Hand Fallacies: Theory and Applications." *Review of Economic Studies* 77 (2): 730-778.
10. Plott, C. and K. Zeiler. 2005. "The Willingness to Pay?Willingness to Accept Gap, the "Endowment Effect," Subject Misconceptions, and Experimental Procedures for Eliciting Valuations." *American Economic Review* 95 (3), 530-545.
11. Smith, V. L. 1976. "Experimental Economics: Induced Value Theory." *American Economic Review* 66 (2): 274-279.
12. Smith, V. L. 1982. "Microeconomic Systems as Experimental Science." *American Economic Review* 72 (5): 923-995.
13. Spybrook, J., H. Bloom, R. Congdon, C. Hill, A. Martinez, and S. W. Raudenbush. 2011. "Optimal Design Plus Empirical Evidence: Documentation for the 'Optimal Design' Software." Download from <http://hlmssoft.net/od/>.
14. Falk, A., and J. J. Heckman. 2009. "Lab Experiments Are a Major Source of Knowledge in the Social Sciences." *Science* 326 (5952): 535-538.
15. Works cited in the papers under required readings.
16. Other work by the authors of the required readings.
17. Work by the following authors and their co-authors: (1) Lise Vesterlund, (2) Uri Gneezy, (3) Aldo Rusticini, (4) James Andreoni, (5) Charles Sprenger, (6) Dan Ariely, (7) Sendhil Mullainathan, (8) Erica Field, (9) Pam Jakiela, (10) Abigail Barr, (11) Dean Yang, (12) David McKenzie, and (13) Xavier Giné.

18. Work by the Busara lab in Kenya, IFPRI, J-Pal, IPA, ideas42, White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the World Bank Development Economics Research Group, and the World Bank Behavioral Innovations Lab.

Recall that these lists are not exhaustive.

6 Assessment

Your performance will be assessed by means of two three-page research ideas due on Friday, December 4, 2015 at 11 PM Göttingen time (5 PM Atlanta/Durham time) via email at aviceisz@spelman.edu. Please include “Goettingen” in the subject line, so your email is routed to the correct folder.

Each proposal must contain the following sections:

1. Statement of the research question (1-2 sentences).
2. Motivation/importance of the problem (4-5 sentences).
3. Brief summary of related literature (4-5 sentences).
4. Proposed data and experimental design. What variables will you need in your analysis? How can you obtain the needed data via an experiment and related approaches such as survey or administrative data? Some details on the treatments/internal validity, protocol, budget, timeline etc.
5. Empirical strategy (identification strategy and proposed estimating equations). Include a discussion of the required sample size and the extent to which this may be informed by software such as Optimal Design.
6. Key outcomes (include “mock-ups” of key tables), expected results, and brief discussion of external validity.
7. Your publication strategy (first and second submission and why; 2-3 sentences).
8. NOTE: (1) These research ideas must be for feasible projects you could carry out as part of your dissertation or publish as an independent paper. (2) **One proposal must mainly focus on an LFE and the other must mainly focus on an RCT.**

Each proposal must be formatted as follows:

1. Font: 11 point Times New Roman.
2. Line spacing: Single.
3. Margins: 1 inch all around.
4. Length: No longer than three pages.
5. File format: PDF.