

Fall 2013 Research Projects

1. “Experiments on Microfinance in Developing Countries”

Professor [Dean Karlan](#)

The research assistant will help analyze data from experiments in developing countries on microfinance and other policy experiments. The research assistant must either know Stata already or be comfortable taking on the task of learning Stata independently, and quickly.

Examples of projects

include http://karlan.yale.edu/p/sme_consulting_mexico.pdf and <http://karlan.yale.edu/p/eui13.pdf>, as well as several on savings experiments motivated by theories from behavioral economics.

2. “The Effects of Campaign Spending on Election Outcomes”

Professors [Steven Berry](#) and [Philip Haile](#)

This is a new project aimed at understanding how campaign spending affects voting in U.S. congressional and presidential elections. The end product will be an empirical analysis of data on expenditures, candidate characteristics, and voting, relying on a model of voter preferences. The initial work for the RA will involve gathering and organizing the data. Later, the RA will perform descriptive data analysis and eventually move on to an initial econometric analysis using instrumental variables. The RA should have a strong interest in working with data, some experience working with Stata (or similar software), and (especially) a willingness to learn more independently.

3. “The Growth and Development of Libertarian Economics in the USA in the postwar period”

Professor [William Nordhaus](#)

This study will trace the development of libertarian and conservative economic thinking since 1945. It will trace the role of the economic shocks, the Great Depression, and central planning as formative elements. Key thinkers will focus on Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Joseph Schumpeter, Milton Friedman, William Buckley, and Jeffrey Miron, as well as trace the influence of the Mon Pelerin Society. The student RA will gather materials and summarize arguments from the different thinkers. Students should have completed introduction micro and macro and intermediate micro.

4. “Major Historical Big Pushes from the point of view of Macroeconomics”

Professor [Aleh Tsyvinski](#)

The RA will work on a project of studying major historical big pushes from the point of view of macroeconomics. We have already studied one such push — Stalin’s industrialization. More broadly, we want to compare Stalin’s Great Break, Japan’s Meiji Revolution, China’s Great Leap Forward, Turkey under Ataturk, and India under Nehru. The RA will be involved both in collecting, constructing, and analyzing long-term historical data series as well as doing extensive historical readings on the policies and the background for each or some of the countries.

5. “Exploring Health Insurance Reclassification Risk Using Hospital Data”

Professor [Amanda Kowalski](#)

As a result of the Affordable Care Act of 2010, we will soon see a significant number of changes to the health insurance market. One such change is the elimination of reclassification risk, or the risk that a change in health status

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will lead to a change in insurability. The main objective of this project is to measure the value of reducing reclassification risk in health insurance markets.

The research assistant will be responsible for exploring and analyzing the health insurance variables within New York SPARCS hospital discharge data and reporting results using tables and graphs. Preliminary results will determine next steps. Candidates should have a basic understanding of Stata and an interest in learning more independently.

6. “Understanding Child Development and Parental Investments in Developing Countries”

Professor [Costas Meghir](#)

Child poverty is an important social problem in many countries. This has far-reaching implications for the life of the individual and for future generations: child poverty is associated with worse adult outcomes (such as education, health and earnings); it is also associated with bad outcomes for the next generation as poor parents tend to invest less in their children leading to negative developmental outcomes thus perpetuating poverty. In other words there is a cycle of intergenerational transmission of deprivation.

The main object is to be able to design policies that are capable of breaking such an intergenerational transmission mechanism and providing better (or even equal) opportunities for people to benefit from economic development. The first step in such a process is to understand the dynamics of poverty, the mechanisms that lead to under performance and the role of parental behavior in nutrition and learning.

A great research opportunity for both cross-country comparisons and longitudinal research on child poverty has been provided by the Young lives Survey project which has collected individual level data over a number of years with focus on children in Ethiopia, Peru, Vietnam and India. The RA will help me understand the data and describe child poverty and its dynamics and in these four countries. Overall this fits in with my research agenda on early childhood development and education. More details on the Child Development research, and the experimental work in Colombia can be found on [my website](#).

7. “Sources of Demand for Rural Electricity: Evidence from the US Rural Electrification Act”

Professor [Joseph Shapiro](#)

1.2 billion people across the world lack access to electricity, mostly in rural areas. This research studies the consequences of rural electrification by analyzing the Rural Electrification Act (REA), which provided electricity to about 12 million Americans over the period 1936-1957. Research assistance is needed with several tasks: digitizing historical reports; preparing archival maps for econometric analysis; and possibly preparing data for analysis (using Stata). Basic familiarity with Stata and interest in environment/energy issues are useful though not required.

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