2026 ASSA Program

PHILADELPHIA, PA JANUARY 3 – 5

Friday, January 2

ASE Plenary Session and Reception

Event

Friday, Jan. 2, 2026 · 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM (EST)

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Liberty Ballroom C

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics
Presiding: Farida Khan, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs

Speaker(s)
Sanjay Reddy, New School
Topic: The Predicament of Economics

Saturday, January 3

Labor, Security and Power Dynamics in the Labor Market

Paper Session

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (EST)

Philadelphia Convention Center, 303-B

Hosted By: Association for Evolutionary Economics & Association for Social Economics
Chair: Valerie Kepner, King's College

JEL Classifications

J0 - General

B5 - Current Heterodox Approaches

Bargaining-power in Households - A Measurement Issue

Hoa Vo, American University
Natalia Radchenko, American University

Abstract

In the context of widening inequalities and persistent gender stratifications, accurate measurement of individual agency within households has become increasingly important for understanding the ethical and distributive dimensions of economic life.
Bargaining power within households influences decision-making, resource allocation, and individual well-being. Addressing the limitations of current metrics, this paper proposes a data distribution based bargaining power index and highlights underlying deviations from predominant social norms. By analyzing how individuals conform to or diverge from normative decision-making patterns, this approach captures variations in agency, power, and constraint within the household. Ultimately, this provides a more rigorous tool for examining how gendered power structures and social norms intersect to shape women's labor supply.

Pay Her More and Other Strategies for Closing the Gender Wage Gap

Valerie Kepner, King's College
Paula Cole, University of Denver

Abstract

The U.S. gender wage gap is well documented and acknowledged by many Americans—less clear is why and how to reduce this economic problem. This paper seeks to outline the weakened economic power women have from lower wages and propose key changes that will help close the gender wage gap. The most direct way to close the gender wage gap is to increase her earnings. We examine how raising the national minimum wage would improve the earnings of women. Additionally, we evaluate efforts to improve pay transparency to give women more economic power. Finally, we examine the importance of reproductive freedom as necessary for closing the gender wage gap and this fight over economic power.

Rethinking Job Security: Alternatives to the Tenure Model in a Changing Labor Market

Miki Malul, Ben Gurion University

Abstract

As the labor market undergoes rapid transformation, the traditional tenure model faces increasing scrutiny. This study investigates alternative policy models that could provide job security in a dynamic employment landscape. Specifically, we analyze how individuals assess job security across three key dimensions: income stability, employment continuity assurance, and workplace security. We simulate various welfare policy scenarios, including alternative unemployment benefit structures, workfare programs, and basic income models.

The Pain of Creative Destruction

Ranganath Murthy, Western New England University

Abstract

Mainstream economic theory argues that free trade benefits the nation as a whole: the gains of the winners are large enough to more than compensate the losses suffered by the losers. In practice, such compensation has not transcended the hypothetical. The pain of creative destruction has hence fallen most heavily on those least able to withstand its perennial gale—workers, who have nothing to sell but their own labor. The mechanistic models of mainstream economic theory assume implicitly that labor markets are fluid and frictionless, even in the relatively

short run. In such a world, workers who lose their jobs to cheap imports will quickly find good jobs in booming industries, by relocating if necessary. In recent years, mainstream and even some conservative economists are waking up to the fact that globalization has not led to widely shared prosperity. This essay surveys the impact of trade on jobs in the United States since the end of World War II.

Rising Military Expenditures, Climate Change, and Government Debt Crises

Paper Session

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · **8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Chair: Giuseppe Fontana, University of Leeds

JEL Classifications

E6 - Macroeconomic Policy, Macroeconomic Aspects of Public Finance, and General Outlook

H5 - National Government Expenditures and Related Policies

Rising Military Expenditures, Green Transition, and Fiscal Sustainability: Could Italy Meet the EU Climate and Military Expenditures Goals?

Giuseppe Fontana, University of Leeds

Abstract

Italy is the third-largest economy in the European Union after Germany and France. Italy has also the second-highest government debt-to-GDP ratio in the EU after Greece. Italian economy has been under close scrutiny since the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC). Italy has struggled to comply with the budgetary discipline recommended by the European Commission. The Covid-19 crisis and the 2022 energy costs crisis have depressed the Italian economy further. The aim of the paper is to assess the impact of the rising military expenditures, social ecological transition on the Italian economy in terms of long-run sustainability of its government debt/GDP ratio and economic growth. The paper also aims to speculate on the implications of the analysis in terms of social norms.

Risk Spillovers from Climate Policy Uncertainty to Energy Markets: Does Climate Policy Stringency Matter?

Muhammad Ali Nasir, University of Leeds

Abstract

In addressing climate change and advancing the energy transition, the imbalance in energy supply and demand caused by climate policy uncertainty (CPU) may trigger risk spillovers across global energy markets. This paper characterizes the complex risk contagion between the CPU and the global energy market utilizing an improved high dimensional time-varying parameter vector autoregressive (HD-TVP-VAR) model. A dual machine learning (DML) approach is applied to test whether strict climate policies can mitigate the risk spillover from the CPU to the energy market. The results indicate that the risk connections between CPU and various national energy markets are highly interconnected, revealing a high-dimensional intricate network characteristic. Within this systemic risk framework, countries such as Indonesia, Poland, South Africa, France, Austria, and the United States are risk spillovers. The risk spillover of CPU exhibits evident time-varying characteristics, and the extent of CPU's risk spillover effects on individual national energy markets varies. Furthermore, we find that climate policy stringency (CPS) plays a significant mitigating role in CPU risk spillover to energy markets. These results provide valuable insights into the effective identification of CPU's risk contagion paths in the global energy market and how to enhance the risk prevention capability in the global energy market.

Natural Resource Security with Energy Efficiency and Digital Governance for Sustainable Development: Evidence from Global Economy

Vishal Dagar, Great Lakes Institute of Management

Abstract

In today's technological integration, digitalization of government services is a vital indicator of a country's progress toward sustainable development. It underscores the extent to which electronic transformation augments the ability of the government to modernize the public administration, deliver efficient services, ensure transparency, and foster civic engagement. Present manuscript investigates the distributional properties, as shown by quantiles of digital governance on the effectiveness of natural resource efficiency using both theoretical frameworks and empirical analyses using panel data across 178 economies spanning the years 2000 to 2022. Our findings reveal that digital governance significantly enhances natural resource efficiency. Specifically, a 1% increase in the E-Government Development Index (EGI) is associated with substantial reductions in natural resource depletion (NRD) and energy intensity (EI) by up to 27.42% and 8.35%, respectively, at higher quantiles. Moreover, digital governance positively influences agricultural orientation index (AOI) and access to clean fuel technologies (ACFT), with increases of up to 1.76% and 1.21%, respectively. These findings predominantly stem from the enhancement of government digital services, which is a decisive indicator of a versatile governance and administration. Moreover, the enhanced governance through digital monitoring of energy efficiency, proper control of energy usage will lead to strategic decision making in lowering energy intensity, reduce waste, and promote sustainable practices. These findings suggest policymakers to fully integrate digitalization into governance and develop effective strategies in offering digital education, integration of internet and training programs via government portals.

Climate Policy, Biocapacity Debt and Public Debt- New Evidence from Panel Threshold Approach

Merih Uctum, CUNY-Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center

Abstract

The United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference COP 28 in 2023 identified the "triple planetary crisis"—climate change, air pollution, and biodiversity loss—to be the three main and interlinked environmental challenges in front of humanity (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2023). A call to action has been issued, centered on the urgency for a joint approach to both climate action and nature conservation, because ecosystems, besides being suppliers of renewable natural resources to humanity, are also carbon stores. Consequently, reversing the rise in global temperature and the rise of biodiversity loss are considered closely linked, and targets are set for both reversal processes. These goals, however, face a major challenge from the rising public debt levels in most economies, which forces governments to make difficult choices between spending on social services and the environment. While existing studies on climate policy have been centered on CO_2 emissions (Boly et al., 2022) or biocapacity (Doytch et al., 2025), we propose an approach that examines the impact on ecological debt of public debt based on biocapacity deficit (Footprint Network). More specifically, we investigate whether countries' approach to reducing ecological debt depends on their public debt threshold levels. Working with a panel data set of 180 countries for the period 1961-2022, we differentiate countries based on an endogenously determined public debt threshold level, following Wang and Uctum (2024) methodology.

Captured by Conflict: Examining the Consequences of War on the Board

Maria Cubel, City University of London
Julia Engel, Kiel University
Patrick Nüss, IWH Halle
Santiago Sanchez-Pages, King's College London

Abstract

We explore the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on a high-level cognitive task using data of professional chess players. Analyzing over 400,000 chess games played over the course of four years and matching air attack alarms in Ukraine to players' home regions we are able to map the effect of war on human cognitive performance in the civilian population. We show that air alarms are associated with a temporary decline in cognitive performance. Our results indicate that individuals from relatively safer regions are affected less than individuals from frequently targeted regions.

Social Economics: Sustainability and Environment

Paper Session

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · **10:15 AM - 12:15 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics
Chair: Paolo Ramazzotti, University of Macerata

JEL Classifications

Q2 - Renewable Resources and Conservation

Q5 - Environmental Economics

The Four Pillars of a Sustainable Society

Faruk Ülgen, Université Grenoble Alpes

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to assess the links between four critical pillars of any consistent societal framework, ecology, economy, equality and equity, with a view to establishing the conditions for a possible transition to a sustainable society. The article maintains that such a transition, called eco-transition, is a process of radical change that concerns society's entire economic structure, and requires collective action and specific regulatory mechanisms. Organizing and managing eco-transition in an effective and sustainable way is a challenge that involves rethinking our relation to markets and environment, regarding the constraints and opportunities related to the necessary coexistence of private interests and public aims, overlapping conflictual relations among private and public actors as well as among different countries and divergent geopolitical perspectives. In this aim, the article studies, in the first section, the specific features of the four facets (the four E's) of eco-transition and puts forward the close links that gather them around a central issue: the regulation of transition financing. The second section argues that eco-transition is a long-term process that requires stable long-term financing. Financial regulation should therefore aim at ensuring durable and relevant support for creativity in favor of technological and organizational solutions for a

possible transition without letting speculative behavior take control of financing operations and generate recurrent systemic crises. The third section develops on the principles of a consistent regulatory framework that would allow the financial system to fund eco-transition in a stable way, sheltered from short-term speculative pressures, and taking into account the four critical pillars of sustainability.

Ground Rent in the Capitalocene: Alfalfa, Institutions, and Climate Emergency

Kurt Semm, Columbia University

Abstract

This paper applies a modern theory of rent, grounded in classical political economy and real competition, to explain the persistent overconsumption of freshwater in the Colorado River Basin. Focusing on the alfalfa industry—responsible for 37% of the river's water use—this study challenges neoclassical models of water governance that frame water scarcity as a result of market failures and mispricing. Instead, it demonstrates how rent-seeking behavior and institutional structures under capitalism systematically incentivize the depletion of water resources. Drawing on the works of Smith, Ricardo, Marx, and Shaikh, the paper differentiates between Differential Rent I (fertility-based), Differential Rent II (capital intensity-based), and Absolute Rent to reveal how capital investment, legal water rights, and competitive pressures combine to drive unsustainable alfalfa production. Employing USDA yield data, evapotranspiration anomalies, and inflation-adjusted capital outlays, this study integrates hydro-economic modeling with rent theory. Findings show how institutional advantages, particularly in the Colorado River Compact states, allow landowners to intensify rent extraction despite escalating ecological stress. The paper concludes by advocating for an alternative governance approach that moves beyond marginal pricing, recognizing rent-seeking as a structural feature of capitalist competition and calling for policies that integrate hydrological models with rent theory to address the underlying economic incentives driving freshwater depletion.

Health Effects of Climate Change and Mitigating Effects of Climate Policies: Evidence from Bangladesh

Shaikh Eskander, University of Alabama-Birmingham

Abstract

This paper explores the health co-benefits of a climate adaptation funding initiative undertaken by the government of Bangladesh. We first investigate the effect of in utero exposure to rainfall variations on child health outcomes in Bangladesh and find that in utero exposure to rainfall variations negatively affects children's anthropometric outcomes. We then exploit the heterogeneity in location and timing of district-level adaptation funding allocations for climate projects under the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust to identify that some of these rainfall-induced health adversities can be mitigated through climate policies. our results inform that these adaptation funding might have improved local infrastructure, labor market, and food security, and thereby transformed into reduced health adversities of the beneficiaries. Our estimated health co-benefits of adaptation funding are robust to alternative empirical specifications and have important policy implications.

Right to Water or Privilege? Examining Structural Inequities in Kenya's Water Sector

Kent Alwaka Mukoya, Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company
Patrick Mwangi Waweru, Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company

Abstract

Access to water services is essential for realizing sustainable development and poverty reduction. The International United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal No. 6 envisages universal and equitable access to safe water for

all by the year 2030, primarily as an impetus for the actualization of these holistic UN objectives which aims eradication of poverty at the fall of the year 2030. In line with global efforts and aspirations on attainment of water sector set goals, the Kenya government has constantly evaluated its sector's policy framework to resonate with the international trajectory with a focus of realizing the global water sector efficacy. Of significance, is the constitutional recognition of access to quality sufficient quantity of water to all as a basic human right. Despite this constitutional commitment, the country's water sector regulator, Water Services Regulatory Board performance monitoring reports indicate persistence of disparities in the accessibility, quality and affordability of water across urban and rural regions in Kenya. The trend analysis of these reports signify that low- income and marginalized communities continue to suffer from poor service delivery. These patterns of exclusion raise ethical questions about how public utilities and regulatory frameworks are upholding or failing to uphold equity of resource water distribution. This study seeks to interrogate the extent to which structural inequalities are being reproduced in water sector, particularly by examining the performance of Water Services Providers. Ultimately, the findings will inform policy interventions aimed at enhancing sector performance.

Biodiversity Risk Disclosure and Analyst Forecasts

Lorán Chollete, Sacred Heart University
Mahfuja Malik, Sacred Heart University
Ching-Chih Lu, National Chengchi University

Abstract

Does the disclosure of biodiversity risk already affect analyst forecast accuracy? This question is important in light of recent initiatives by academics and global policymakers to raise awareness about biodiversity. Biodiversity is a key component of natural capital, and fosters economic development and societal wellbeing (Heal (2020); Dasgupta (2024)). While the natural resources literature has long underscored economic aspects of biodiversity, researchers are just beginning to study financial implications. We examine the relationship between biodiversity information disclosure and analyst forecast accuracy. We expected scant impact but surprisingly, we find that biodiversity disclosure in concert with environmental risk helps analyst forecast two years ahead.

Social and Economic Issues in Asia

Paper Session

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · **12:30 PM - 2:15 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics
Chair: Farida Khan, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs

JEL Classifications

F4 - Macroeconomic Aspects of International Trade and Finance

G2 - Financial Institutions and Services

In the Shadow of Giants: The Economic Impact of US-China Relations on Southeast Asia

Huiwen Chen, Fudan University

Abstract

As the global order shifts, Southeast Asia's trade flows and foreign direct investment (FDI) patterns are increasingly shaped by the evolving dynamics of US-China relations. The intensifying rivalry between the world's two largest economies creates significant economic uncertainty, particularly for developing regions like Southeast Asia, which relies heavily on trade and FDI. This paper seeks to predict the economic impact of escalating US-China tensions on Southeast Asian nations by analyzing the extent to which political allegiance to these global superpowers influences trade patterns and investment flows.

Focusing on the Philippines (US ally), Cambodia (China ally), and Indonesia (neutral), this paper examines how their political orientations towards the US and China translate into tangible economic outcomes. Through a comprehensive analysis of historical trade data, policy shifts, and geopolitical alliances, it explores how global power struggles reshape regional economic connectivity and trade dependencies. The study particularly emphasizes the effects of trade wars, tariffs, technological competition, and strategic alliances on Southeast Asia's economies.

In an era marked by a retreat from multilateralism, environmental degradation, and the erosion of social safety nets, Southeast Asia's central role in global supply chains is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the uncertainties and policy fluctuations emanating from the US and China. This paper argues that understanding the political alignments of Southeast Asian nations with these two powers is crucial to forecasting future economic trajectories in the region. By providing insights into how geopolitical tensions influence economic resilience, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how Southeast Asian countries can navigate these challenges and safeguard their economic interests in a rapidly changing global environment.

What Factors Influence Chinese Government Bond Yields?

Tanweer Akram, Bermuda Monetary Authority
Shahida Pervin, Waseda University

Abstract

This paper models the dynamics of long-term Chinese government bond (CGB) yields based on an autoregressive distributive lag (ARDL) approach. It examines whether the current short-term interest rate has a decisive influence on long-term CGB yields, after controlling for various macroeconomic variables. The estimated models all show that the current short-term interest rate has an economically and statistically significant effect on the long-term CGB yields of various maturity tenors. John Maynard Keynes claimed that a central bank's policy rate exerts an important influence over long-term government bond yields through the current short-term interest rate. The paper's findings evince that Keynes's claim holds for China, implying that the People's Bank of China's (PBOC) actions are a key driver of the long-term CGB yields.

Regulatory Forbearance, Credit Misallocation, and Zombie Lending

Md Rezwanul Hoque, Florida International University

Abstract

"This paper examines the negative externalities of "evergreening" credit in Bangladesh.
Using firm-level data, we document the rise of zombie firms – unproductive and unviable
businesses that survive on cheap credit despite generating insufficient profits to service

their debt. By crowding out credit to non-zombie borrowers, zombie lending significantly impaired productivity, sales, and employment of healthier firms. We identify these effects using an unexpected change in Bangladesh Bank policy that reduced regulatory inspection of banks' credit portfolio, a form of forbearance that effectively allowed banks to extend subsidized credit, thereby keeping zombies afloat. Consistent with congestion externalities associated with zombie lending, we find that a higher share of zombie firms is associated with lower likelihood of entry of relatively healthier firms. Overall, our results underscore the unintended consequences of regulatory forbearance, especially when borrowers cannot substitute bank credit with alternate forms of debt."

Impact of Large-Scale Refugee Influx on the Host Country's Labor Market: Evidence from Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

Shahida Pervin, Waseda University

Abstract

More than 700,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar to escape a violent military operation against them and poured into neighboring Bangladesh in 2017. The refugees have been concentrated in the border district of Cox's Bazar, where the number of refugees is equivalent to one-third of the district's population of 2.3 million. The sudden and localized influx of refugees was an unexpected massive shock to the local labor market, changing the factor endowment between districts.
Higuchi et. al. (2025) find a revealed hostility toward the refugee population that 57% of hosts willingly bore personal costs to reduce the amount of donations provided to support the Rohingya. Alam et.al. (2022) estimate an eight percent increase of overall food prices in the host sub-district of Ukhia. Some other studies deal with various impacts of refugees, such as forest loss, psychosocial impact, wages. However, few studies were found on implications of Rohingya refugees for the entire host country's labor market issues, including employment, working conditions, and mobility. This paper intends to fill that gap.
We consider Cox's Bazar district, which experienced refugee inflow, as the treatment group and other districts as the control group to conduct a difference-in-differences analysis. We use the Labor Force Survey data for 2016, 2017, and 2022, and also collect data and insights from the field visit. We test the hypothesis that the large supply of low-wage labor from refugees has reduced the replacement costs for employers, reducing their incentive to improve the working environment, leading to a worsening of the working environment. We also plan to quantitatively analyze how production patterns and population movements have changed due to the refugee inflow. The research is in progress, and the results are not yet ready. In the ASSA meeting, we plan to present a part of our results and analysis.

Roundtable on the Trump Economic Program and Its Impact: A Critical Assessment

Panel Session

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM (EST)

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Grand Ballroom Salon A

Hosted By: Association for Evolutionary Economics, Association for Social Economics & Union for Radical Political Economics

Moderators:

Geoffrey Schneider, Bucknell University

Howard Stein, University of Michigan

JEL Classifications

B5 - Current Heterodox Approaches

H1 - Structure and Scope of Government

Abstract

The policies of the Trump administration have called for a radical break from the past. Internationally they imposed tariffs on its closest trading partners, closed down USAID, withdrew from important international agencies and agreements like the WHO and Paris Accord, threatened to punish any countries pushing for de-dollarization and are moving to economically and politically align with Russia. Domestically they moved to shutter key regulatory agencies like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Led by Elon Musk and DOGE, they have imposed tens of thousands of government layoffs across most agencies, proposed huge cutbacks to important social programs like Medicaid and are in the process of evicting thousands of undocumented immigrants many of whom provide labor for key sectors like agriculture and meat packing. They are considering the privatization of key government agencies like the USPS. These cuts are intended to finance a massive tax cut mostly aimed at reducing the burden on the upper one percent. And, they have aggressively attacked the University system and D.E.I. programs in schools, corporations and government institutions.

This panel of renowned economic experts will engage in a critical analysis of these policies from a variety of economic perspectives. At this critical juncture it is important for different economic organizations under the ASSA umbrella to unify in their quest to intellectually interrogate the forces that threaten the livelihoods and rights of millions of citizens.

Panelist(s)

James K. Galbraith, University of Texas at Austin
Topic: The Trump Economic Program

Stephanie Kelton, Stony Brook University
Topic: The Trump Economic Program

Darrick Hamilton, New School
Topic: The Trump Economic Program

Gary Dymski, Leeds University
Topic: The Trump Economic Program

Empirical Investigations in Social Economics

Paper Session

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · **2:30 PM - 4:30 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Chair: Faruk Ülgen, Université Grenoble Alpes

JEL Classifications

R1 - General Regional Economics

Z1 - Cultural Economics; Economic Sociology; Economic Anthropology

An Asymmetric Revisit to the Crime and Inequality Nexus

Fadime İrem Doğan, Bahçeşehir University
Pınar Deniz, Marmara University

Abstract

There is a strand of literature devoted to the relationship between crime and inequality which lies at the center of major theoretical approaches, such as the cost-benefit analysis by Becker (1968), the theory of social disorganization by Shaw and McKay (1942), and the strain theory by Merton (1938). While Becker (1968) uses the cost-benefit analysis of engaging in crime, Shaw and McKay (1942) attribute the rise in crime rates to the weakening of social control within a society; and Merton (1938) utilizes the impact of the relative success of individuals on the frustration, which may lead to the rise in crime rates. These foundational theories demonstrate the connection between individual decision-making, societal structures, and crime. As reported in the literature, economic inequality has shown varying effects on crime rates. This study aims to empirically investigate the asymmetric relationship between crime rates and income inequality in EU states for the period of 1993-2022. Hence, our approach disregards the standardization of a linear link and proposes a novel methodological approach to investigate the issue accounting for nonlinearities. Methodologically, we utilize Kourtellos et al. (2016) structural threshold regression (STR) model to account for nonlinearities. Preliminary analysis reflects the existence of nonlinearity regarding the income inequality and crime rates nexus.

Race Shocks: Manufacturing Declines and Residential Segregation

Aritra Basu, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between manufacturing declines and racial residential segregation in the United States across three major trade shocks: Japanese import competition (1970s-1980s), NAFTA implementation (1990s), and the China Shock (2000s). While existing literature has documented differential labor market impacts of manufacturing decline across racial groups, I examine whether these economic disruptions affect spatial inequality through changes in Black-White residential segregation patterns, regardless of which racial group bears the direct employment losses. Using dissimilarity indices calculated from the Longitudinal Tract Data Base (LTDB) and established measures of trade exposure, I implement instrumental variable and difference-in-differences approaches to identify causal effects. The research follows two complementary paths: first examining whether manufacturing shocks directly increase Black-White residential segregation, and second investigating whether pre-existing segregation mediates differential outcomes in hate crimes, fatal police shootings, and incarceration rates following economic disruption. The mechanisms explored include "white flight" from affected areas and diminished public goods provision resulting from reduced tax revenues. This research contributes to our understanding of how economic shocks interact with racial inequality by moving beyond labor market outcomes to examine spatial segregation—a critical determinant of intergenerational opportunity. By examining three distinct manufacturing shocks over several decades, this study provides a comprehensive assessment of whether economic disruption consistently impedes residential integration, potentially explaining why racial disparities persist even when direct

labor market effects do not show clear racial differences. Preliminary findings suggest that manufacturing declines reinforce existing patterns of racial inequality through channels beyond direct employment effects.

Sectoral Rate of Profit and Elite Dynamics

Hassan Mujtaba, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Abstract

In the literature on corporate power and elite connections, the link between a sector's rise and the corporate elite's infusion into that sector is understudied. Using a Marxian conceptual framework, this paper fills in this gap by linking the average rate of profit of a sector—calculated as the ratio of surplus-value extracted (S) to the cost of labor and non-labor input (C+V)—to the infusion/diffusion of elites in that sector using centrality measures standard in the social network analysis. To achieve this, the author will create a panel of representative publicly listed companies from all sectors of the United States economy using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) for the years 1995-2025. Then, using the Compustat database, the author will extract various measures of the firm's financial statement (specifically income statement) to measure the rate of profit. Subsequently, data on corporate elites—specifically on the board of directors—of these companies will be extracted from BoardEx and matched to the financial data to ascertain a pattern or lack thereof. The author expects community detection in the tech and financial sectors, as well as a high degree centrality and eigenvector centrality, among other measures that will be used. This shall also be a partial vindication of the so-called "techno-feudal" hypothesis popularized by Varoufakis (2023) and Durand (2024), among others.

Shocks at Home: Child Accidents and Maternal Outcomes

Ning Li, Salisbury University
Jamie Emerson, Salisbury University
Brian Hill, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Abstract

Traumatic accidents have become a leading cause of mortality and morbidity among U.S. children, with a troubling upward trend contributing to billions of dollars in annual economic losses. However, how such events impact household economic decision-making remains understudied, particularly with regard to mothers who often serve as primary caregivers. Using 1994-2020 data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) and its linked child sample, this study examines how unanticipated child accidents and injuries affect maternal time allocation, labor supply, and disability status. Exploiting the random and unanticipated nature of these events, we apply a difference-in-differences approach using two-way fixed effects models. Results suggest that while child injuries requiring medical attention do not affect maternal labor force participation overall, they significantly reduce the likelihood of mothers working more than 30 hours per week. Such injuries also increase the odds of maternal disability. Surprisingly, more severe incidents requiring hospitalization do not appear to significantly impact maternal labor supply or disability, possibly reflecting differences in duration, symptoms, or care needs across injury types. Spousal presence, access to childcare, and health insurance coverage may moderate these effects. These findings add to the literature concerning the impacts of children's health shocks on parental labor supply and deepen our understanding of the economic burden undertaken by women within households. The findings can also help identify particularly vulnerable groups and inform the design of targeted policies (e.g., paid family leave policy, universal child health insurance, etc.) to improve the welfare of mothers when facing child health shocks.

ASE General Membership and Business Meeting

Event

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026 · **4:45 PM - 6:30 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 305

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Presiding:

Belinda Roman, St. Mary's University

Farida Khan, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs

Sunday, January 4

ASE Presidential Breakfast

Session/Event (Invitation Only)

Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026 · **7:45 AM - 10:00 AM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Independence Ballroom Salon I & II

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Presiding: Farida Khan, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs

Speaker(s)

Belinda Roman, St. Mary's University
Topic: Field Ethics: Adjusting to Realities on the Ground in Health Policy RCTs

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Stratified Lives: Wealth, Finances, and the Uneven Grounds of Access

Paper Session

Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026 · **10:15 AM - 12:15 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Chair: Steve Pressman, Monmouth University

JEL Classifications

D1 - Household Behavior and Family Economics

Indebtedness, the Cost of Borrowing, and the U.S. Working Class

Leila Davis, University of Massachusetts-Boston
Charalampos Konstantinidis, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Abstract

In this paper, we analyze the distribution and burden of debt for the U.S. working and nonworking classes between 1989 and 2022. Using a definition of social class based on employment relationship and occupation, we document that, notwithstanding a moderately larger rise within the working class, non-working class households have higher a average debt-to-income ratio. Nonetheless, we show that the debt-to-income ratio masks differences in the nature of leverage and precarity by class status. First, non-working-class debt is relatively more concentrated in liabilities that build wealth, versus in those that facilitate consumption or help make ends meet. Second, despite their substantially lower debt-to-income ratio, working-class households with debt face higher average required debt payments relative to income than non-working-class households. We link this divergence in the stock and payment burden of debt to borrowing costs: by estimating household-level interest rates, we show that working-class households face higher average borrowing costs than non-working-class households. Working-class households also incur higher rates within certain liability categories – namely in vehicle and installment loans. Thus, similar levels of total borrowing can widen the gap between working- and non-working-class wealth.

Inequality Not Illiteracy: Why Financial Literacy Measures are Bankrupt

Steve Pressman, New School University
Robert Scott, Monmouth University

Abstract

Over the past few decades, the personal finances of American households have become a matter of great concern. High debt has led to financial stress making households vulnerable to bouts of bad luck or a bad economy—consequently, personal bankruptcies are rising. In addition, most people are not saving enough, particularly for retirement. Without sufficient savings, people will encounter financial problems when (or if) they retire. For various reasons, all this weakens the macroeconomy. Financial literacy has become a popular policy solution to these problems. The belief is that people lack financial literacy and therefore make poor financial decisions leading to debt and bankruptcy. This line of argument, however, blames the victim. It also assumes that more financial knowledge alone can fix what is wrong with the finances of low- and moderate-income households. We argue that this is all incorrect. We use household survey data to explore the actual factors that drive financial knowledge and more importantly financial behavior. Our research highlights the role of failing social policies in the United States over the past few decades as the predominant factor affecting household finances. Many expenses in the past were heavily subsidized with public funding—healthcare, higher education, retirement savings (e.g., pensions vs. 401Ks). Over this time these responsibilities have shifted to individuals. As this happened, what were once social goods have become private consumption goods. Falling real wages led households to substitute expensive debt for the difference in earnings resulting from increased costs of education, retirement and healthcare. This analysis leads to two conclusions. First, if financial literacy is to blame, then it is public officials who are illiterate. Second, to measure financial literacy correctly, we must abandon the current financial literacy questions and come up with questions that are more relevant to the current situation facing struggling households.

Generational Wealth and Contemporary Entitlements: Assessing their impacts on the Racial Wealth Gaps

Robert B. Williams, Guilford College

Abstract

Many acknowledge the role of generational wealth – itself the product of centuries of White supremacist policies – in creating the contemporary racial wealth gaps among Whites, Black, and Latinx households. What is less recognized is the impact of current federal entitlements – those buried in the vast tax code.

This paper reveals the consequential effects of these 12 tax deductions that function like entitlements. Unlike other entitlements, half of these have no limit on their benefits. Most have an asset requirement in that they require recipients own specific assets like a home or retirement account. In 2024 alone, these tax entitlements showered over $1.2 billion to mostly White and wealthy households, placing them only slightly behind Social Security.

This paper examines the role of generational wealth and these tax entitlements in widening the racial wealth gaps over the past 33 years. It does so by using evidence taken from the Survey of Consumer Finances and merging it with Joint Committee on Taxation estimates of federal tax expenditures. Consistent with the literature, family intergenerational transfers are estimated using two different methods. The distributional benefits of the dozen tax entitlements are estimated using household balance sheets.

Preliminary analysis indicates that intergenerational family transfers averaged from $244 to $284 billion annually depending on which method used while the entitlement benefits averaged around $589 billion annually. Further the entitlement benefits have grown more quickly than the increase in family transfers. To be sure, the estimates of family transfers represent a lower bound to the role played by generational wealth.

Minority Depository Institutions’ Community Development Dilemmas: Evolving Financial Technologies in an Era of Racialized Governance and Geo-Economics

Gary Dymski, University of Leeds
Jesus Hernandez, University of California-Davis
Melody Chiong, University of California-San Diego

Abstract

Minority development institutions (MDIs) constitute an institutional response to the historic systematic exclusion of racial/ethnic minorities in the US from equal access to land and finance. Their activities have always unfolded in economic landscapes shaped by powerful regional interests hostile to – or at best uninterested in – minority communities’ prosperity. This imbalance is now reinforced by a national government bent on systematically dismantling whatever mechanisms for subaltern minorities’ economic advance survived the neoliberal era.
This paper explores the evolving situation of MDIs through a Los Angeles lens. LA’s history of race-based public investment and housing credit policies and practices, resulting in stark patterns of residential segregation, has led since the 1940s to the creation of a robust MDI sector owned and managed by members of the Black, Latino, and Asian Pacific Islander communities subjected to this exclusion.
LA’s MDIs have been concentrated in segregated spaces whose history of underinvestment and neglect often make them targets for revitalization. The region’s uneven but relentless inflows of money and wealth over the past 40 years have not only subjected many long-time residents to removal; they have also led to divergent trajectories for LA’s MDIs. Asian-American banks have played an important role in leveraging resources for the communities they serve, due in part to the stimulus provided by the US immigration-investment program (now called EB-5). Meanwhile, the very different geo-economic circumstances under which LA’s Black and Latino banks have operated have compromised their capacity to transform the circumstances of the people of the neighborhoods they have historically served. The challenge of overcoming these dynamics, already daunting, has been heightened during the second Trump presidency. His administration has swung the country back to the 1930s, vehemently denying that the national government should acknowledge, much less reverse, its past and present patterns of

Volatile Work, Vulnerable Minds: Evidence from the SHED Data

Inhwa Kim, Lone Star College

Abstract

This study examines how behavioral vulnerability and employment volatility jointly structure household scarcity responses and forward-looking financial insecurity. Using microdata from the 2022 Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED), the analysis integrates three behavioral domains of scarcity—hardship, inflation-adaptation, and liquidity stress—with a composite measure of anticipatory financial insecurity. Across harmonized regression specifications, a consistent empirical architecture emerges: subjective financial fragility is the strongest predictor of all scarcity outcomes, loss aversion amplifies sensitivity to downside risk, and job-market instability—especially involuntary shocks—substantially elevates both acute and anticipatory forms of economic vulnerability. Voluntary job separations exert limited influence on hardship and inflation adaptation but significantly heighten liquidity stress, revealing domain-specific pathways through which labor-market dynamics shape household financial behavior. The results show that employment volatility operates not only as a structural constraint but also as a behavioral catalyst that shapes expectations, coping strategies, and perceived resilience. The paper contributes to research on financial fragility by demonstrating that scarcity is organized around a unified behavioral–volatility mechanism that links present constraints to forward-looking economic insecurity.

The Dynamics of Labor: Opportunity, Mobility, and Inequality

Paper Session

Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026 · **2:30 PM - 4:30 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Chair: Vishal Dagar, Great Lakes Institute of Management

JEL Classifications

J1 - Demographic Economics

J3 - Wages, Compensation, and Labor Costs

The Impact of State-Level ESG on Employee Quit Rates

Khawaja Saeed Mamun, Longwood University
Carolyn Soper, Central Connecticut State University
Samantha Schenck, Central Connecticut State University

Abstract

The United States has seen a dramatic increase in the number of people leaving their jobs in recent years, a trend which has been dubbed the Great Resignation. While this trend has impacted the entire country, the rates at which people are choosing to leave their jobs has varied significantly by such things as industry, occupation, and state. For instance, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in August of 2022 1.6% of New York workers quit their job, while during the same month 4.7% of Alaska workers did so. Previous literature attempting to explain varying quit rates across firms and industries have identified job satisfaction as a key component. This paper seeks to identify the

impact of state-level policies, as well as varying labor market standards and norms, on the different quit rates the US has been experiencing over the past few decades, with particular attention paid to the Great Resignation.

Trading Today for Tomorrow: Gender Differences in Lifetime Earnings Expectations and the Early-Career Wage Gap

Eunhye Kwak, Korea Labor Institute

Abstract

Despite having comparable education levels, majors, and job characteristics, female college graduates report 7–9% lower reservation wages before graduation and lower initial earnings than their male counterparts. Prior research often attributes this early-career wage gap among young, childless individuals to differences in risk preferences related to extended job searches or overconfidence. In this study, I propose an alternative explanation: differing expectations about lifetime earnings.

Assuming individuals seek to maximize lifetime earnings upon labor market entry, men typically face lower uncertainty about their future labor supply. In contrast, women may anticipate greater uncertainty—stemming from potential career interruptions due to childbirth and a stronger preference for non-monetary job attributes. This paper explores whether women strategically trade higher starting wages for more stable long-term earnings by selecting occupations with lower penalties for reduced labor supply.

To test this hypothesis, I employ a two-pronged empirical strategy. First, using nationally representative data, I find that men's wages grow steadily across industries, whereas women's wage growth patterns vary widely by sector. Strikingly, the more closely women's wage trajectories resemble men's—without steep declines at certain ages—the larger the initial gender wage gap. I present supporting evidence that women entering industries with steadier long-term earnings accept lower starting wages, with several robustness checks confirming the result.

Second, I analyze survey data from randomized controlled trials involving over 4,000 near-graduation college students to investigate the relationship between earnings expectations and reservation wages. Female students tend to report more pessimistic lifetime earnings expectations than males. Notably, only among women is there a significant relationship between expected lifetime wage growth and reservation wages. Furthermore, women's reservation wages respond significantly to a randomly assigned hypothetical scenario involving a performance-based pay system, whereas men's do not.

Pride and Prejudice: Caste Norms, Status Anxiety, and the Economic Cost of Distinction

Anirban Ghatak, Indian Institute of Management-Kozhikode
Nandagopan _, Indian Institute of Management-Kozhikode

Abstract

Existing scholarship on caste in India predominantly focuses on marginalization and victimhood, often neglecting the economic behaviours of those enforcing caste hierarchies. This paper addresses this critical gap by exploring how households adhering to rigid caste norms economically perpetuate social distinctions. Unlike previous empirical studies, which typically employ caste merely as a marker of identity, this paper argues that such an approach is insufficient for understanding how households actively navigate and reproduce caste hierarchies. Instead, it advances the perspective of examining caste as an everyday practice.

Employing empirical data from the India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II), the study investigates conspicuous consumption among households practicing untouchability, analysing spending patterns related to visible status markers, social functions, and weddings. Drawing from Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption and Bourdieu's concept of distinction, it argues that these expenditures serve not simply as expressions of wealth, but as strategic investments to sustain social hierarchy and caste privilege.

The findings reveal that higher-caste households deliberately allocate substantial resources towards conspicuous spending at the cost of essential investments in education, healthcare, and basic necessities. These practices underscore an economic inefficiency rooted in caste-based status anxiety—households fear losing symbolic and

social privileges to lower-caste groups increasingly adopting similar consumption styles. By continuously redefining markers of social prestige, upper-caste households ensure caste hierarchies remain entrenched, despite formal legal prohibitions.

Ultimately, this paper aims to quantify the extent to which deeply entrenched caste norms influence economic outcomes and foster inefficiencies at the household level. The core hypothesis being that while these households may leverage their bias to maintain a semblance of caste-based cultural purity, the broader economic and social repercussions reflect a clear inefficiency: a community and economy operating well below its potential due to the barriers erected by prejudice.

Wages and Firm Profitability over the Business Cycle: Evidence from the US Hotel Industry

Chris Boone, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
Akash Bhatt, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
Michael Paz, Purdue University Northwest

Abstract

In this paper, we investigate the distributional impacts of macroeconomic fluctuations on workers and firms in the US, with a specific focus on the hotel sector, which employs many low-wage workers. We utilize proprietary establishment-level panel data containing annual information on revenue, profits, and multiple categories of expenses, including expenditure on different types of labor, for the years 2010-2024. As the economy recovers from the Great Recession, increases in customer demand contribute to higher revenue and firm profitability. At the same time, increases in labor market tightness could reduce profitability if rising wages lead to higher input costs. By exploiting variation in local economic conditions across space and over time, our study seeks to disentangle the impacts on firm profitability due to changes in output demand and changes in local labor market tightness. We show how the relative contribution of these two channels varies over the course of this period, with the recovery in demand and occupancy rates preceding the labor market recovery. We supplement the analysis with individual-level data on employment and wages in order to examine the relationship between labor market conditions, employer financial performance, and wage inequality. The results help us better understand the drivers of wage growth as well as firm profitability. By separately identifying the impacts for workers and firms---studying who benefits, when, and how much---our findings also contribute to our understanding of the political economy of full employment policy.

Monday, January 5

Gender Issues in Social Economics

Paper Session

Monday, Jan. 5, 2026 · **8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics
Chair: Katherine Moos, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

JEL Classifications

B5 - Current Heterodox Approaches

Gender-Diversity, Occupation, and Caring Labor

Rob Haggar, SUNY-Cortland

Abstract

This paper problematizes the narrow and gender-binaristic framing of gender differentiation within labor markets, and especially caring labor. Using the Household Pulse Survey, this paper offers a statistical comparison of employment sector gender composition which allows for explicit consideration of the sectors of employment of transgender and gender diverse individuals.

Feminist Economics as a Framework for Smuggling Literature

Alena Shalaby, University of California-Santa Barbara
Nicole Cerpa Vielma, University of California-Santa Barbara
Kathy Palomino, University of California-Santa Barbara

Abstract

Recent scholarship demonstrates how feminist economics (FE) intersects with other literatures–from environmental studies, public health, geography, and economics. As an epistemological alternative to neoclassical economics, FE understands gender relations as a structural component underlying all economic processes, rejects an orthodox understanding of productivity, accepts a broader definition of well-being, recognizes the various ways people relate to each other, and refuses the notion that individuals hold preferences that are independent of socio-political conditions. In our piece, we place FE in conversation with the smuggling literature to generate deeper, globalist, and interdisciplinary approaches to their scholarship. Following critical migration scholars' analyses on smuggling, we find that FE provides the theoretical framework necessary to explore the structural conditions that make informal markets and economic activities attractive to smuggling actors. We identify the inadequacies of using a neoclassical framework to analyze smuggling as it results in perpetuating a division between informal and formal markets that sanitizes the complex, mutually constitutive communication between the two. Here, we decompose the neoclassical economic approaches in the smuggling literature to locate how an FE approach corrects the hidden, gendered structural components involved in smuggling that renders the activity a viable professional option for women and other historically subsumed, racialized, and criminalized actors.

Gender and Racial Wage Gap Dynamics in Brazil: Contributions of the Public Sector

Mieke Meurs, American University
Luiza Nassif, University of Campinas Brazil
Joao Pedro de Freitas Gomes, University of Sao Paulo
Sara Costa Pedreira, University of Sao Paulo

Abstract

In Brazil, where labor markets are still influenced by the history of slavery and strong patriarchy, wage gaps by race and gender rank near the top of upper-middle income countries. A large literature shows both gaps declining over recent decades, and distinct explanations for them. Gender differences are more explained by differences in returns to skills and unobserved factors, while racial gaps are still more due to skill differences (as well as differences in returns). Because public sector employment is more highly regulated than the private sector, it is often a source of wage-gap reduction. In Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, and S. Korea, for example, wage gaps are smaller in the public sector. Brazil, however, has larger pay gaps in the public sector (ILO, 2018), such that the public sector contributes to

the persisting compensation gaps. Nevertheless, the role of the public sector in contributing to wage gaps has been less studied.
We examine dynamics in wage gaps over the period 2012-2023. We use two methods to decompose them and identify factors contributing to change. We calculate factor-weighted wage gaps by race and gender (ILO, 2024), to examine how workers with similar characteristics differ in wages, and how these worker-types contribute to the overall earnings gaps (for example, is the gap mainly the result of gender/racial gaps among low-educated, young, informal workers?). We then use the Fortin et. al. (2011) decomposition to examine differences in factors contributing to wage gaps across the wage distribution. Because selection into private and public sectors affects income gaps, and differences in the composition of the two sectors appear to play a role in the earnings gaps, we analyze selection and incorporate this into our discussion of results. Our analysis contributes to a better understanding of the role of public sector employment in reducing wage gaps.

Credit Access and Women's Bargaining Power within the Household: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial

Mohammed Abdul Malek, Miyazaki International University
Amzad Hossain, University of Arkansas
Marup Hossain, Texas Tech University

Abstract

Microfinance's impact on women's empowerment is one of the most important topics discussed in developing countries. Evidence suggests that microcredit participation increased women bargaining power within household through participation in market-based income earning opportunities. Contrary to this argument, microcredit might not empower women in developing countries like Bangladesh, as loans extended to women are mostly controlled by men. Thus, the empirical findings have been mixed. However, most of the earlier studies rely on non-experimental design and have often been criticized on the identification issue. Banarjee et al. (2015) evaluated six randomized evaluations and reported that four of those studies estimate effects on female decision power within the household, three of which find no effect; Only Mexico sees a small but significant increase in female decision power. Thus, the impact of microfinance on women's empowerment vis-à-vis bargaining power remains a subject of contention. Given this backdrop, we use a randomized control trial field experiment, on agricultural microcredit targeted for tenant farm households (women borrowers) conducted in Bangladesh to estimate the impact on women's bargaining power. By using standard micro-econometrics technique, we show that microfinance enables the women from the treated areas to participate more in self-employment activities and earn more compared to the women from the control households. While we do not find any effect of microcredit on average women's bargaining power within the household, we use standard machine learning technique and detect significant heterogeneity. The effect of microcredit is significantly higher for households with more female labor force participation, or with more female self-employment income, or with a more educated female family member. We also develop a simple model of intra-household bargaining power that supports our empirical findings. Finally, we show that women's higher bargaining power leads to better child developmental outcomes, reinforcing earlier findings from the development literature.

Trump's Care Agenda: the Re-Regulation of Racialized and Gendered Labor

Katherine Moos, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Abstract

In addition to dismantling Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs, Project 2025 contains numerous policy recommendations related to gender and care, such as ending the federally funded Head Start program and promoting familial, at-home childcare. Both sets of policies aim to re-regulate the participation of women and minorities in the workforce—a priority of the Trump administration's regressive political economic agenda. The Trump administration's policies are motivated by a specific vision of labor markets and capital, as well as beliefs about the cause and consequences of persistent inequality. The vision outlined in Project 2025 contrasts with previous objectives pursued by government, business, and academia that promoted investment into diversity and

human capital. This paper will discuss and contextualize the theoretical underpinning of both progressive and regressive approaches to addressing the conflicts and contradictions of regulating gendered and racialized labor. The policies outlined in Project 2025 demonstrate both a departure from previous neoliberal approaches to diverse human capital, as well as an increasingly fractured and ideologically heterogenous capitalist class. These insights can clarify previous under-examined assumptions and implications within social reproduction theory about the state and capital's vested interest in the social reproduction of labor power.

Developments in Social Economics Theory

Paper Session

Monday, Jan. 5, 2026 · **10:15 AM - 12:15 PM (EST)**

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Room 407

Hosted By: Association for Social Economics

Chair: Rojhat Avsar, Columbia College-Chicago

JEL Classifications

B5 - Current Heterodox Approaches

Z1 - Cultural Economics; Economic Sociology; Economic Anthropology

Social Context and the Evolution of Empathy

Jeremy Garrison, Colorado State University

Abstract

Human societies differ fundamentally in the social context of their economic interactions: whereas hunter-gatherers depend primarily on familiars for their subsistence, people in market societies depend primarily on strangers. This variation raises a critical question: How does social context influence the evolution and behavioral expression of cooperation? Experimental evidence consistently shows that empathy diminishes with social distance between interactors. Using evolutionary game theory, I examine how this discriminatory empathy evolves in various social-economic ecologies. I situate the evolutionary game on a network with distinct social and economic layers and define empathy as cooperation conditional on social proximity. The results reveal that when interactions occur among both familiars and strangers, discriminatory empathy outperforms unconditional cooperation, but when interactions occur only among strangers, empathy produces no cooperation. These findings highlight the behavioral consequences of anonymous market societies and provide insights for designing institutions and structuring human ecologies that better foster cooperation.

Revising the Moral Arguments Black Reparations in the US in light of the Economic Arguments

John Davis, Marquette University

Abstract

There are currently two kinds of arguments for paying reparations to the descendants of enslaved individuals in the US, one economic regarding how it should be done and one moral regarding why it should be done. However, these arguments were developed independently of one another, and rely on different conceptual foundations. Successful public policy for paying reparations needs both kinds of arguments and needs them to be mutually supporting. This paper argues that the burden of adjustment falls on the current moral arguments. Their reliance on Locke's natural rights thinking and neoclassical economics individualism makes them philosophically problematic, unrealistic, and ultimately unpersuasive. The economic arguments for reparations rely on Stratification economics, and represent individuals as members of social groups. They provide support for concepts of group rights and collective moral responsibility, and provide a basis for more realistic and persuasive moral arguments for reparations.

Secularization of Linguistics in the Review of Social Economy over 80 Years

Rojhat Avsar, Columbia College-Chicago
Anita Pena, Colorado State University

Abstract

The Association for Social Economics (ASE) started as the Catholic Economic Association in 1941 but was rebranded to its current name in 1970. Building on the Association's origins and longstanding interest in ethical dimensions of economics, we examine contributions that appeared in the Association's Review of Social Economy (ROSE) journal which existed under both association names. We will investigate how the contextual usage of terms such as "justice," "equity," "fairness" and "ethics" have shifted from more theologically grounded to more secular, policy-oriented connotations over time in ROSE using latent semantic analysis (LSA). LSA is a computational method that captures shifts in word meaning and relational patterns across texts. Through this project, we will present a case study demonstrating how LSA can support qualitative economic research by tracking language shifts and evolving rhetorical voices with potential academic and policy significance. To provide historical linguistic grounding for our analysis, we intend to train models using texts published prior to 1941 that are thematically and linguistically similar to those appearing in the first issues of ROSE. Candidate training texts that we have identified include "Social Aspects of Christianity" by Richard T. Ely (1899) and the papal encyclicals "Rerum Novarum (Leo XIII, 1891) and "Quadragesimo Anno" (Pius XI, 1931). These texts are chosen based on alignment with early ROSE content in both theme and tone—blending Christian social thought with economic analysis. Ultimately, our project should deepen understanding of ROSE's intellectual trajectory while providing a methodological template for examining moral language evolution in other academic economic forums.

Why Would Capitalist States Pursue Gender Equality?

Kal Hardenbergh, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Abstract

The feminist macroeconomics literature contains a wide array of analyses of macroeconomic policies and their gendered impacts. They share a foundational argument that gender matters for macroeconomics: gendered structures are the terrain where policy operates and macroeconomic policies produce results that are not gender-neutral. But beyond understanding how macroeconomic policy interacts with gender, why would existing capitalist states pursue gender egalitarian outcomes? This paper examines the answers provided by the feminist economics literature, creating a classification of three distinct approaches. The first approach contains instrumental arguments: assertions based on empirical connections between feminist economic policies and favored macroeconomic outcomes. The second approach centers ethically grounded arguments that begin from critiques of traditional economic measurements of wellbeing. These include the feminist economic manifestations of the capabilities approach, the human rights approach, and the social provisioning approach. Lastly, the social reproduction approach shares a basis of focusing on processes of reproduction which are essential to the perpetuation of the macroeconomy, connecting biological reproduction to capitalist reproduction. I argue that the social reproduction literature provides the most productive analyses of the conditions wherein states would share an interest in progressing feminist macroeconomic policy agendas and the limitations of reforms led by capitalist states. Still, this literature contains a diversity of approaches to the state and continues to wrestle with its theorization. Representing a wide range of positions within the feminist macroeconomics literature, the approaches presented here highlight

the necessity for greater clarity in the theorization of the state and the relationship between economic analysis and real-world policy change.

Social Costs: A Real Issue, A Theoretical Conundrum

Paolo Ramazzotti, University of Macerata

Abstract

Despite its intuitiveness, the notion of social cost raises theoretical conundrums that impinge on economic policy. Social costs often are intuitive and easily identified – consider on-job mortal accidents or the environmental consequences of pollution – but a metric is required to assess them on firmer grounds and to ascertain what it would cost to do away with them. The main contention of the paper is that such a metric depends on neither strictly objective nor strictly subjective criteria.
The paper begins with a survey of how the concept is used in economic theory. It focuses on three major approaches. The first one is based on neoclassical theory. It considers social costs as just another term for externalities, that is, consequences of economic activity that relative prices do not take into account. The policy implications consist in determining institutional changes that provide a solution to these market failures. The second approach points out that a social cost exist only if the legal system permits it. Consequently, whether a social cost exists or not is less a strictly economic problem than a matter of ethical/political choice. The third approach explains social costs in terms of the irreconcilability of two economic goals in a capitalist market economy: profitability and people's livelihood. Despite their insights, neither one of these approaches provides a clear metric.
The second part of the paper examines two possible means to assess the reduction of social costs: happiness and the freedom to choose how to conduct one's life. In doing so, it argues that they provide useful insights but that are of little use as abstract indicators. Their operationalization in policy terms requires interaction between ordinary people and economists (more broadly, social scientists).