An important practical objective of empirical economic research is to predict the consequences of alternative public policies. Economists combine data with assumptions to draw conclusions about policy impacts. The strength and credibility of these conclusions depend on the data and assumptions brought to bear, as well as on the analytical methods used. This course studies basic methodological problems in policy analysis and examines how economists perform policy analysis in practice.

The prerequisites are courses in microeconomics at or above Economics 310-1 and econometrics at or above Economics 281, preferably Econometrics 381. Instruction includes lectures and class discussion. Examination of methodology and applications occurs throughout the course. Grading is based on multiple short essays/problems (10 points), a midterm briefing paper on an assigned topic in policy analysis (30 points), and a student-initiated final research paper that assesses some aspect of policy research (60 points).

Instruction in this course seeks to promote academic freedom of expression, as discussed in the 2007 report of the AAUP on Freedom in the Classroom: https://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/A/class.htm

Texts
C. Manski, *Identification for Prediction and Decision* (IPD), Harvard University Press, 2007 (required)
C. Manski, *Patient Care under Uncertainty World* (PCU), Princeton University Press, 2019 (required)

**Syllabus** (tentative)

**Communicating Uncertainty in Policy Analysis** (9/21, 9/23)

**Predicting Policy Outcomes** (9/28, 9/30, 10/5, 10/7)
IPD Chapters 1, 2, 7

**Patient Care under Uncertainty** (10/12, 10/14, 10/19, 10/21, 10/26)
PCU Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
IPD Chapters 11, 12

**Covid-19** (10/28, 11/2, 11/4, 11/9)


Midterm Essay Due: Monday October 26, 9:00 AM
Final Paper Due: Monday December 6, 9:00 AM
Tentative Lecture Schedule

9/21 - introduction to course
9/23 - communicating uncertainty in policy analysis (PNAS article)
9/28 - conditional prediction (IPD chap. 1)
9/30 - missing outcomes (IPD chap. 2)
10/5 - analysis of treatment response (IPD chap. 7)
10/7 - analysis of treatment response (IPD chap. 7)
10/12 - patient care under uncertainty: introduction, clinical guidelines and judgement (PCU chap. 1)
10/14 - wishful extrapolation from trials (PCU chap. 2)
10/19 - credible use of evidence to inform patient care (PCU chap. 3)
10/21 - reasonable care under uncertainty (PCU chap. 4, IPD chap. 11)
10/26 - reasonable care with sample data (PCU chap. 5, IPD chap. 12)
10/28 - statistical decision properties of imprecise trials assessing Covid-19 drugs (VIH article)
11/2 - bounding the Covid-19 infection rate (Journal of Econometrics article)
11/4 - vaccination planning under uncertainty, with application to Covid-19 (working paper)
11/9 - forming Covid-19 policy under uncertainty (JBCA article)
11/11 - climate modeling and policy analysis (PNAS article)
11/16 - climate modeling and policy analysis (PNAS article)
11/18 - proactive policing policy (PNAS article)
11/23 - proactive policing policy (PNAS article)

The topics to be discussed in the sections will be chosen as the course progresses.

Recording by the Instructor: This class or portions of this class may be recorded by the instructor for educational purposes. Any recordings will be shared only with students enrolled in the course in Canvas and will be deleted at the end of the quarter. Note that this applies to recording of synchronous class components and not to pre-recorded lectures by the instructor and not featuring student contributions.

Recording by Students: Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU.

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