EITM-Oslo Summer Institute 2024
Theoretical Implications of Empirical Models

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Abstract

In this module, we will turn the main focus of this program on its head. Just as formal models have testable empirical implications, many of the research designs commonly used in political science are premised on strategic interactions, the structure and outcomes of which are relevant for the interpretation and validity of empirical results. A nascent scholarly literature has recently begun to unpack these *theoretical implications of empirical models (TIEM)*. We will learn a general framework for connecting empirical research designs to their theoretical underpinnings. Then, we will think through the connections between the TIEM approach and causal inference. Finally, we will work through several applications to research designs such as randomized control trials, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity designs, and conjoint experiments, and to research topics central to the study of representative democracy, including how governments respond to citizen protest, the role of the media, and voter rationality.

The main text for the course will be *Theory and Credibility* by Ashworth, Berry, and Buena de Mesquita. This book will provide a general framework for us to use, critique, and extend. The other readings will be recent papers from the TIEM literature. The course will be a mix of lectures and in-class discussion and exercises. Readings and slides will be available in advance.

Part I: Framework & Commensurability

-   Ashworth, Scott, Christopher R. Berry, and Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. 2021. *Theory and Credibility: Integrating Theoretical and Empirical Social Science*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Part II: Causal Counterfactuals

-   *Theory and Credibility*, Chapter 3.
-   Slough, Tara. 2017. "Phantom Counterfactuals." *American Journal of Political Science* 67(1): 137-153.
-   Abramson, Scott F, Korhan Kocak, and Asya Magazinnik. "Pathologies of Causal Inference."

Part III: Theorizing Research Designs

- ***Overview***: *Theory and Credibility,* Chapters 5 and 10
- ***Regression Discontinuity:*** Eggers, Andrew C. 2017. "Quality-Based Explanations of Incumbency Effects." *Journal of Politics* 79(4): 1315-1328.
- ***Instruments & Randomized Control Trials:*** Deaton, Angus. 2010. "Instruments, Randomization, and Learning about Development." *Journal of Economic Literature* 48: 424-455.
- ***Conjoint Experiments:*** Abramson, Scott F, Korhan Kocak, and Asya Magazinnik. 2022. "What Do We Learn About Voter Preferences from Conjoint Experiments?" *American Journal of Political Science* 66(4): 1008-1020.
- ***Government Responsiveness to Protest:*** Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan and Scott A. Tyson. 2020. "The Commensurability Problem: Conceptual Difficulties in Estimating the Effect of Behavior on Behavior." *American Political Science Review* 114(2): 375-391.
- ***Media & Democracy:*** Wolton, Stephane. 2019. "Are Biased Media Bad for Democracy?" *American Journal of Political Science* 63(3): 548-562.
- ***Voter Rationality:*** Ashworth, Scott, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Amanda Friedenberg. 2018. "Learning about Voter Rationality." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(1): 37-54.