

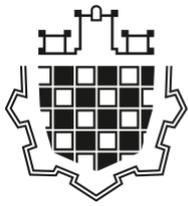
MANNHEIM
BUSINESS
SCHOOL

CHAIR OF QUANTITATIVE
MARKETING AND CONSUMER
ANALYTICS

Available Topics for **Economics for Business & Policy**

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Consultancy hours: by appointment



1. Digital Platform Competition & Market Power

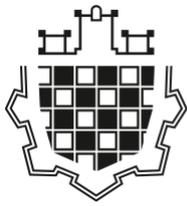
This paper examines competition and market power in digital platform markets, drawing on recent theoretical and empirical contributions in the economics of multi-sided platforms. Building on foundational models of platform pricing and cross-side externalities, the project studies how network effects, user heterogeneity, and multi-homing shape competitive outcomes and welfare. A central focus is the trade-off between intensified competition and network fragmentation, which may generate inefficiencies even in the absence of monopoly. The analysis further explores how market power manifests through pricing, entry, and strategic conduct such as mergers or acquisitions of potential rivals. Recent empirical evidence from platform industries is used to assess the welfare implications of consolidation, interoperability, and innovation suppression. Overall, the paper aims to clarify when platform competition enhances efficiency and when it may instead reinforce market power and social losses.

2. Data as an Economic Asset & Privacy Regulation

This seminar paper examines the economic properties of data as a nonrival asset and the resulting implications for privacy regulation. Based on core economic literature, students will explore how the nonrivalry of data creates increasing returns and potential social gains, while analyzing why firms might inefficiently "hoard" data to prevent creative destruction. The topic investigates the trade-offs between different property rights regimes—such as consumer-led vs. firm-led ownership—and how these affect output and welfare. Furthermore, the paper will analyze the role of data brokers and digital platforms in creating market segmentations and managing competition through targeted information disclosure. Finally, students are encouraged to evaluate how "privacy-preserving signals" and data-governance rules can balance the economic value of information with the protection of sensitive consumer characteristics.

3. AI, Automation & the Future of Work

This seminar paper examines the economic consequences of automation and AI, focusing on the tension between worker displacement and the creation of "new work". Drawing on recent literature, the topic explores how automation accounts for a significant share of rising U.S. wage inequality by displacing labor from routine tasks and depressing real wages for vulnerable groups. Crucially, the research extends beyond wages to analyze how technological gains accrue to capital owners, thereby intensifying wealth inequality. It further investigates the "inefficiency" of rapid



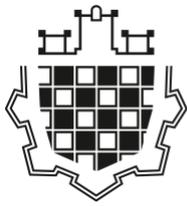
automation when workers face high reallocation costs and borrowing constraints, which may justify policy interventions such as automation taxes. By synthesizing historical evidence from past automation waves with modern theoretical frameworks, students will evaluate how the labor market balances the erosion of old occupations with the emergence of new frontiers of work.

4. Climate Policy, Carbon Pricing & Firm Behavior

This seminar topic examines how carbon pricing and market-based regulations influence firm-level decision-making and industry competition. Drawing on empirical evidence from the EU Emissions Trading System, students will analyze the effectiveness of these policies in reducing emissions without harming economic performance. The research investigates critical challenges such as carbon leakage and the interaction between emissions regulation and market power in concentrated industries. Additionally, the topic explores international policy solutions, comparing the efficacy of carbon border taxes against the formation of "climate clubs" to prevent free-riding. Finally, the analysis considers how climatic and economic uncertainties determine the optimal risk-adjusted social cost of carbon. By synthesizing these studies, students will evaluate the mechanisms necessary for designing effective and sustainable global climate policies.

5. ESG & Sustainable Finance

This seminar topic explores the economic mechanisms through which Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations and sustainable finance influence corporate behavior and welfare. This research investigates the effectiveness of stakeholder "exit" versus "voice" strategies in curbing negative externalities. The curriculum delves into whether intense market competition erodes moral standards or remains irrelevant to ethical behavior when prices are flexible. Students will analyze how socially responsible investment (SRI) funds can achieve real impact by trading off financial performance for social goals, particularly in the presence of financing constraints. Furthermore, the paper examines the behavioral underpinnings of sustainable finance, including the role of "big business discontent" and limited memory recall in shaping public policy preferences. Finally, it quantifies social impact as a trade-off between prosocial costs and external benefits, distinguishing between genuine corporate caring and strategic greenwashing.



6. Innovation, Patent Policy & Growth

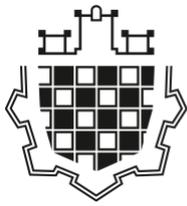
This seminar paper examines how patent policy and institutional frameworks shape the relationship between innovation and economic growth. Drawing on recent literature, the research explores the "leadership paradox," where market leaders use political connections to survive rather than innovate, potentially hindering creative destruction. It further analyzes the role of disclosure policies, such as the AIPA, in accelerating technology diffusion and reducing duplicative R&D efforts. Students will also investigate the design of optimal R&D subsidies and corporate taxes in the presence of private information and technological spillovers. Finally, the paper evaluates the impact of patents on follow-on innovation, using evidence from fields like human genomics to test whether patent protection truly impedes subsequent scientific progress.

7. Supply Chains, Trade Shocks & Geo-economic Fragmentation

Supply chains and production networks serve as critical conduits for the propagation of international shocks, where firm-level responses to trade policy and uncertainty significantly shape aggregate economic outcomes. Recent literature highlights that trade shocks—such as unanticipated input tariffs or the removal of trade policy uncertainty—not only affect employment and sourcing decisions but also induce a "flight to safety" where firms reorganize supply chains toward more stable, albeit potentially less productive, suppliers. This reorganization often leads to substantial output and market value losses, particularly when disruptions hit suppliers of highly specific or differentiated inputs that are difficult to substitute. Furthermore, the transmission of these shocks is mediated by firm heterogeneity, as large, import-intensive firms adjust their markups and strategic pricing in ways that small firms do not, thereby influencing aggregate price pass-through and the degree of geo-economic fragmentation. Consequently, supply chain "stickiness" and the costs associated with searching for new partners create significant welfare implications and determine the long-term resilience of domestic manufacturing in an increasingly fragmented global economy.

8. Industrial Policy & Strategic Subsidies

This seminar topic explores the "new economics of industrial policy", analyzing how targeted subsidies shape firm behavior, employment, and aggregate productivity. Using recent high-quality empirical literature, students will examine the causal impacts of investment and R&D grants across various institutional contexts, such as the UK's Regional Selective Assistance and the US SBIR



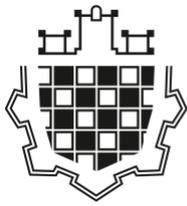
program. A central focus will be the heterogeneity of treatment effects, specifically why subsidies often generate significant growth in small, credit-constrained firms while showing limited impact on larger corporations. The topic also addresses critical design dilemmas, such as the trade-off between objective, rule-based allocation and the use of political discretion in awarding funds. Furthermore, students will investigate the equilibrium effects of these policies, including the potential for "crowding out" domestic competitors in less-traded sectors versus generating positive spillovers in globally integrated industries. By synthesizing evidence from literature, the paper should provide a nuanced evaluation of how modern frameworks like the CHIPS Act or the EU Green Industrial Plan can be optimized for economic efficiency.

9. Market Concentration, Productivity & Monopoly Power

This seminar explores the long-run trajectory of corporate concentration in the United States and its shifting impact on productivity and consumer welfare. While empirical evidence indicates that production concentration has risen persistently over the past century, the macroeconomic consequences vary significantly depending on whether these trends are driven by "superstar" firms, sectoral distortions, or international competition. Recent research suggests that while domestic production concentration is increasing, the rise of foreign competitors has actually kept overall "market concentration" stable in many sectors. Furthermore, new network-based theories demonstrate that market power is not merely a product of industry-wide trends but is deeply rooted in product market rivalries and the "centrality" of firms within supply chains. These distortions can have disproportionately large effects on the aggregate labor wedge, potentially amplifying financial frictions and reducing total factor productivity. Students will analyze these dynamics to evaluate robust regulatory frameworks designed to protect consumer surplus and mitigate the deadweight losses associated with oligopolistic behavior.

10. Inflation, Monetary Policy & Firm Pricing

This seminar paper explores the intricate relationship between macroeconomic conditions, monetary policy communication, and the micro-level pricing decisions of firms. Building on recent empirical evidence, the research investigates how firms acquire and process information in environments characterized by rational inattention and strategic competition. A primary focus is placed on how the dispersion of inflation expectations can lead to the misallocation of resources across firms, thereby impacting aggregate total factor productivity (TFP). Furthermore, the paper examines the role of central bank communications—including forward guidance and "information



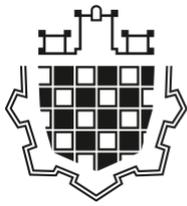
effects"—in shaping the beliefs of both firms and households. By analyzing how strategic incentives and information rigidities amplify monetary non-neutrality, the study seeks to clarify why firms' price changes often appear disconnected from aggregate inflation expectations. Ultimately, the paper evaluates how modern monetary policy tools can be effectively deployed to anchor expectations and stabilize economic outcomes in an increasingly complex inflationary landscape.

11. Energy Markets & Energy Transition

This seminar topic explores the complex economic dynamics and policy challenges inherent in the transition to renewable energy within modern electricity markets. Drawing on recent literature, the seminar will analyze how market integration, such as grid expansion in Chile, acts as a catalyst for new renewable investments and improves allocative efficiency. Participants will also investigate the critical role of energy storage as a complementary technology, evaluating how large-scale battery adoption can mitigate the intermittency of solar and wind power while fundamentally altering market equilibrium and price structures. Furthermore, the seminar will examine the behavioral and political economy aspects of the transition, focusing on how evolving consumer values and individual investor responses to price incentives drive technical change. By comparing market-based dispatch with traditional regulatory regimes, students will evaluate the short-run gains in cost reduction and the long-run investment incentives necessary to achieve a welfare-increasing green transition. Ultimately, the seminar paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how policy interventions, such as carbon taxes or technology subsidies, interact with market failures to determine the pace and success of the energy transition.

12. Competition Policy & Killer Mergers

This seminar paper topic examines the complex interplay between competition policy and the strategic phenomenon of "killer acquisitions," where incumbent firms acquire innovative start-ups specifically to discontinue their projects and preempt future competition. While traditional economic views often see such acquisitions as a way to realize synergies, recent evidence—particularly in the pharmaceutical industry—suggests that 5.3% to 7.4% of acquisitions may be motivated by the desire to shield existing profits from cannibalization. This strategic behavior is closely linked to the "replacement effect," where incumbents have weaker incentives than entrants to develop overlapping innovations. Furthermore, these acquisitions frequently occur just below the thresholds for antitrust notification, potentially evading regulatory scrutiny and contributing to a decline in business dynamism. The paper will explore how modern competition policy must evolve to address



these preemptive strikes against innovation. It will also consider the broader implications of rising market power and its potential to stifle the "gale of creative destruction" essential for economic growth.

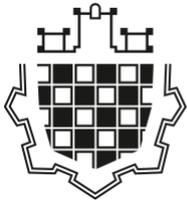
13. Consumer Behavior, Behavioral Economics & Nudging

This paper examines how information frictions and cognitive biases lead to "externalities," where consumers make choices that do not align with their own best interests. By analyzing economic literature across diverse sectors—such as energy-efficient technology, health insurance, and social media—you will investigate the mechanisms through which informational interventions and "nudges" influence decision-making. The research focuses on the theoretical and empirical evaluation of whether these policies, like simplified labels or algorithmic adjustments, truly improve social welfare or inadvertently increase the variance of choice distortions. You will also assess how these behavioral insights interact with traditional policy tools like taxes and market prices. Ultimately, the work aims to determine the conditions under which behavioral interventions successfully mitigate consumer misoptimization in complex markets.

14. Housing Markets, Urban Economics & Land Use

This seminar paper topic explores the complex drivers of housing market fluctuations and the resulting implications for urban welfare and land-use policy. Building on recent economic research, the paper will examine the relative roles of credit conditions, belief shifts, and housing market segmentation in driving price cycles and homeownership. Specifically, students can analyze how the degree of segmentation between rental and owner-occupied markets determines whether credit shocks transmit into house prices or primarily affect homeownership rates. The topic also encompasses the study of "pecuniary externalities," where financial frictions can lead to inefficient over-borrowing or under-investment, necessitating potential macroprudential interventions. Furthermore, the paper can investigate the effectiveness of local policy levers—such as rent stabilization, upzoning, and housing vouchers—in addressing affordability crises while balancing insurance benefits against labor market distortions. Finally, the research may explore the role of search frictions and endogenous housing liquidity in amplifying macroeconomic shocks and consumption spillovers during market busts.

15. Health Economics & Pandemic Policy



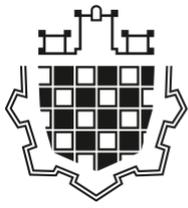
This seminar topic explores the complex trade-offs between public health interventions and economic outcomes during global pandemics, with a focus on optimal policy design and the role of financial market frictions. Using multigroup epidemiological models, students will analyze how targeted lockdowns—specifically those protecting more vulnerable age groups—can significantly outperform uniform policies by reducing both mortality and the severe GDP contractions associated with blanket measures. The research also highlights how institutional constraints, such as sovereign default risk in emerging markets, can lead to "under-investment" in life-saving mitigation due to tight fiscal space and higher borrowing costs. Furthermore, the literature addresses the disaggregated nature of pandemic shocks, demonstrating how supply-chain linkages and production complementarities can amplify sectoral supply shocks while mitigating demand shocks. Finally, the topic examines the international dimension of pandemic policy, quantifying how lockdowns increased trade costs and the potential for debt relief programs to improve both health and economic welfare globally. Students are encouraged to evaluate these intersecting themes to understand the structural determinants of effective pandemic management.

16. Tax Incentives, Multinationals & Profit Shifting

This topic examines how multinational enterprises (MNEs) navigate international tax regimes and the subsequent impact on global economic measurement and efficiency. By analyzing recent empirical evidence, students will explore how profit shifting—estimated at 36% of multinational profits globally—is facilitated by the strategic use of intangible assets like R&D and intellectual property. The paper should investigate the distributive implications of these practices, such as the finding that workers may bear up to 50% of the corporate tax burden through reduced wages. Furthermore, students will evaluate optimal tax design under financial frictions, specifically comparing traditional profit-based taxation to the efficiency of corporate payout taxes. Discussions will also extend to the role of international cooperation, residence-based vs. source-based systems, and the necessity of fiscal policy agreements to ensure production efficiency. Ultimately, the work should address how correcting for profit-shifting distortions reveals a more accurate picture of global capital shares and productivity.

17. Industrial Organization of Online Advertising

This seminar topic explores the complex market structures and strategic interactions that define the modern online advertising industry. Students will analyze the causal effectiveness of digital ads, particularly the "informative" versus "persuasive" views, and the significant challenges in



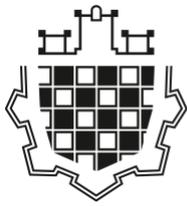
measuring returns on investment due to high sales volatility and consumer heterogeneity. The curriculum delves into the impact of data-augmented auctions and managed campaigns on product pricing, examining how digital platforms leverage proprietary data to enhance matching efficiency while potentially driving up off-platform prices. Additionally, the role of intermediary concentration and the emergence of "buyer power" will be investigated, focusing on how specialized agencies coordinate bidding to influence platform revenues. From a macroeconomic perspective, the paper will consider how digital advertising finances free media goods and affects overall welfare and price competition. Finally, students will evaluate the policy implications of these trends, including regulatory concerns regarding market power, automated bidding, and consumer privacy.

18. Global Competition, Geopolitics & Trade Policy

This seminar topic explores the complex determinants and multifaceted impacts of trade policy in a highly integrated global economy. Using foundational models of Global Value Chains (GVCs), students will analyze how the sequential nature of production and "centrality-downstreamness" linkages influence country specialization and the compounding effects of trade costs. The curriculum will examine the shifting incentives for protectionism, specifically how domestic value-added content in foreign goods can diminish a government's motivation to impose high tariffs. Beyond theory, the seminar evaluates the real-world consequences of recent trade conflicts, highlighting the complete pass-through of tariffs to prices and the resulting losses to consumers. Special attention will be paid to the "China Shock" and its long-term effects on local labor markets, where adjustment to trade competition is often slow and characterized by depressed wages and elevated unemployment. Finally, the topic incorporates the role of geopolitical risk (GPR) as a driver of economic fluctuations, investigating how the threat and realization of adverse global events foreshadow declines in investment and employment. By bridging theoretical GVC frameworks with empirical evidence on trade wars and labor adjustments, students will gain a comprehensive view of how geopolitics and global competition reshape modern trade policy.

19. Gender, Diversity & Labor Market Inequality

This seminar paper topic explores the multi-faceted nature of wage disparities and labor force participation through the lens of modern economic research. The literature identifies that firm-specific pay policies are a significant source of inequality, often manifesting as a "sorting channel" where women are underrepresented at high-paying firms and a "bargaining channel" where they receive a smaller share of job-related surpluses. Research indicates that individual bargaining



behavior varies substantially by gender, with women often asking for and receiving less, which can contribute to a 4 to 5 percentage point increase in the within-firm gender wage gap. Furthermore, labor market power itself is shown to be a driver of inequality, particularly in developing economies where lower competitiveness leads to larger wage markdowns. Beyond firm dynamics, social norms and "pluralistic ignorance" also play a crucial role, as misperceptions about societal support for women working can drastically suppress female labor participation. Finally, the role of non-wage amenities and compensating differentials further complicates these inequities, as workers may sacrifice higher wages for better job characteristics, which are valued differently across diverse groups. Together, these studies suggest that addressing labor market inequality requires a comprehensive understanding of firm-level mechanics, individual bargaining power, and the prevailing social frameworks

20. Entrepreneurship, Venture Capital & Innovation Finance

This seminar explores critical shifts in the global entrepreneurial environment, beginning with the surprising finding that high-growth, successful startups are increasingly led by middle-aged founders rather than the stereotypical young innovator. We will analyze how long-term macroeconomic trends, such as declining population growth, have structurally reshaped firm demographics by shifting the distribution toward older, larger firms, thereby impacting market concentration and the aggregate labor share. The discussion extends to the strategic risks involved in innovation finance, investigating how firms can optimize capital raising from heterogeneous investors to minimize the costs of strategic risk. We further examine the role of asymmetric information in lending, where modern psychometric data and machine learning can identify "top-performing" entrepreneurs who are often overlooked by traditional credit allocation methods. Finally, the topic addresses the substantial gender-based barriers to labor force participation and business expansion, highlighting how promoting female entrepreneurship can serve as a powerful catalyst for broader economic growth and reallocation of talent.