



MSc Seminar
Behavioral, Organizational, and Labor Economics
Steffen Altmann
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Content

This seminar introduces students to state-of-the-art research in behavioral, organizational, and labor economics. It builds on a growing body of research in economics and psychology showing that individual behavior is shaped not only by economic incentives and constraints, but also by psychological factors and limitations in self-control, cognition, and attention.

Students independently and critically analyze research questions at the intersection of behavioral economics, organizational economics, and labor economics. The seminar covers a broad range of topics, highlighting how behavioral insights help explain behavior in real-world settings such as organizations, labor markets, consumer decision-making, and public policy. Depending on the chosen topic, papers may be more behaviorally focused, more closely linked to organizational or labor economics, or combine elements of all three fields.

Examples of research topics and papers from previous semesters include:

- Heuristics and biases in real-estate markets
- Misperceptions and support for climate action
- Experiments on perception and error detection in AI- versus human-generated texts
- Biased beliefs and unemployment duration
- Experimental evidence on founders' reactions to information shocks

Prerequisites

Students should have a sound knowledge of microeconomics and empirical methods. Students will also benefit from previous course work on behavioral economics and labor economics, although no specific previous knowledge is required.

Course Procedures and Timeline (Tentative)

- **Block 1: Introduction.** The course will be introduced by 1-2 lectures in the first three weeks of the semester. In the lectures, we will discuss possible topics for the seminar papers and provide an overview of the required theoretical and empirical methods.
- **Block 2: Writing Period.** Students work independently on their seminar paper (max. 10-15 pages, 12 weeks of time), individual appointments for consultation. Tentative deadline for submission of the seminar paper: July 12, 2026.

- **Block 3: Seminar Presentations.** There will be a workshop (block seminar) where students present their seminar paper drafts. Each student will also act as a discussant for one of the other workshop presentations. Attendance of the full workshop is mandatory (June 22-26 or June 29 – July 03; to be confirmed).

Seminar Paper

The seminar paper can take several forms. Students are expected to actively engage with existing research and, where possible, work with data or experimental designs. Depending on the topic, the seminar paper may involve:

- a replication or extension of an existing empirical paper,
- the design of an own experiment in the lab, online, or in the field, or
- original data collection, for example through a survey or pilot experiment.

The seminar is designed to prepare students for independent research and provides an excellent foundation for a subsequent MSc thesis.

Topics Assignment

Seminar topics will be assigned in the first weeks of the semester. Please check the course descriptions for further information on possible seminar topics.

Examination and Grading

Grading is based on the seminar paper (max. 10–15 pages) and the workshop presentation (approx. 20 minutes), weighted 3:2 (paper 60%, presentation 40%).