

PPHA 35560 - Translating Evidence for Public Policy and Program Design

Prof: Rebecca Wolfe

M, W: 10:30-11:50 AM CT  
Keller 0023

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9 AM – 11 AM: <https://calendar.app.google/qDcTMWJr8ihA6T7k9>  
rebeccawolfe@uchicago.edu

Teaching Assistant  
Vitor Agrella da Silveira

**Overview:** A significant proportion of programs and policies aim to change behaviors. As much of the evidence for behavioral science comes from contexts that are considered WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich Democratic), a question often emerges on how can we know how we interpret and use evidence for international development program and policy design. As the demand for the use of evidence in designing international development programs and policy continues to grow, figuring out how to interpret and use the evidence generated also grows. What about human behavior is generalizable? What is context specific? How do we interpret null results? Mixed outcomes? Short- and long-term effects? Are these results scalable? Additionally, what are the political barriers to using evidence? In this course, we will explore how to think about these issues and others in relation to designing behavioral policies and programs in the international development sphere. We will examine these questions through various development sectors: economic development, governance, food security, refugees, education and peacebuilding.

In this course we will cover various topics related to behavioral science and evidence-informed policy making, including:

- Use of Behavioral Science in International Development
- Elements of Policy and Program Design
  - Theories of Change
- Combining Various Forms of Evidence
- Use of Descriptive Evidence
- Generalizability and Context Specificity
- External Validity
- Scalability of programs
- Ethical Considerations
- Political Barriers

Most weeks, we will dive into at least one evaluation of a behavioral program or policy. We will ask ourselves if and how policy makers could and/or should use this evidence. I will bring in

guest speakers occasionally, either those who worked on the evaluation or practitioners who are figuring out how to use the evidence.

**Teaching Philosophy:** I think much learning happens through direct feedback. Therefore, I have structured the course and assignments to allow for me to provide feedback to students. I will grade all assignments myself in a timely manner. If any of my feedback is unclear, I encourage you to talk with me about it. The point of feedback is to learn.

**Course Structure:** Class will be a combination of lectures, large case-based discussions and occasional small group discussions and exercises. Since there are no clear-cut answers to many of these questions, my aim is to have you become more comfortable with the questions and provide some analytical frameworks for how to think through these dilemmas. The course also aims to help you think through why others may or may not accept evidence, and how to address those barriers.

**Communication:** Direct all administrative questions (e.g., finding a reading, Canvas issues, etc) to the TA. They are very happy to help you. This also allows me to focus my time on the content of the course, grading and substantive questions.

In terms of replies, you can expect replies from me or the TAs during the hours of 8 AM to 6 PM CT, M-F. You may receive replies outside of these times. However, if you contact us after 6 PM, there is a good chance you will not receive a reply until the next day (or Monday morning if you email after 6 PM on Friday).

**Office Hours:** I will conduct offices hours between 10 AM and 12 PM on Tuesdays. Please make an appointment with me in advance via the sign-up sheet. Other appointments can be made by email as necessary.

*Note:* If you are a no-show for an appointment, you will need to communicate with me before scheduling another one. If you do not speak with me first, I will cancel the meeting. Additionally, if you are unable to make an appointment and need to cancel, please also cancel the Google invite. This will open the slot for another student.

**Specialization:** This course is eligible for the IPD concentration.

**Assignments:**

**Note: All written assignments are expected to be single-spaced, 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Those submitted that don't follow these instructions will not be graded. All submissions through Canvas. For references, the only requirement is that you are consistent with the format.**

The crux of your grade will be a three-part assignment that will combine individual and group elements. Over the course of the semester, you will work towards designing an intervention in a country in the Global South. Groups are self-selected with support from the TA.

**The first step is selecting a sector you want to work on and a context where you will be designing a program.** This could be a program we discuss in class (education in Afghanistan; social protection in Kenya; youth workforce development in Rwanda, etc). You will also have to select a context you want to apply it to. Groups and selected sector and context are due January 22nd before class (I likely will meet with each group in class to discuss intervention and context)

The first assignment will be an individual assignment, the second and third will be group assignments.

1. **Individual Assignment: Collecting the Evidence (20%): Due January 31st at midnight, 2 pages (references do not count).** The first building block is collecting the evidence for your intervention. This assignment has two parts. Spend 1 page on each section.

- **Context:** What is the important contextual information you need? This will differ depending on the intervention. For example, if you choose an education program, you likely will want basic information about literacy and school access rates. If it is an unconditional cash transfer program, you may want to document poverty levels and the lack of basic needs access (food insecurity, housing, etc). The point of this eventual section of your proposal is to justify the need for the intervention. In this section, you will be focused on **descriptive** evidence.
- **Sector:** How has this area been addressed in the context you have selected? In other contexts? What is the evidence for progress in the sector? What intervention gaps do you see? Summarize at least two impact evaluations as part of this section.

2. **Group: Designing an Evidence-Informed Theory of Change (15%): February 21st at midnight, 3 pages, including diagram (references do not count).** For the second paper, you will begin thinking through how your intervention, which includes a element, will have the effects you expect. In class, we will discuss how to diagram theories. You will adapt one of these examples, and then use the evidence you found in Assignment #1 to rate the strength of the evidence for the connections between different parts of the intervention and impacts. Specifically, you will identify:

- **Inputs**
- **Outputs**
- **Short term outcomes**
- **Long term outcomes**
- **Impacts**
- **Risks**

While much of this will be part of the final assignment, I want to give you plenty of opportunity for feedback.

3. **Proposing the Intervention (40%): Due March 13th at midnight.** For the final paper, your group will, in essence, write a proposal for the intervention. The paper will include the following sections:

- **Context and Problem Statement: (2 pages).** This is a description of the context, and what is the problem the program will address. You need to write this section to justify why this is a critical issue in this country to solve. For example, in Afghanistan, there are a host of problems to solve: education, governance, poverty. And while they are all interrelated, focus your context analysis on the area of interest. (i.e., girls education lags behind in Afghanistan reducing economic prosperity, etc.). Much of this, if done well, should come from Assignment 1, incorporating feedback (30%)
- **Theory of Change (hypothesis) and Summary of Evidence (2 pages)**
  - The summary of evidence is to justify your Theory of Change. Why do you think this program will have desirable outcomes? This is mostly assignment 2, with adjustments based on feedback (40%)
- **Activities (1 page):** What activities are necessary to operationalize the theory. What is the dosage for the program? (e.g., number of trainings) Do you want there to be spillover? Should cash be given in one large tranche or in smaller tranches? You can bullet point this section. (5%)
- **Evaluation Plan (1 page):** How will the program generate further evidence? What type of evaluation will you try to conduct? What is the sampling strategy (e.g., individual, household, community, etc?) What are the main indicators? (20%)

The total page limit for this assignment is **7 pages, including the diagram** (references do not count). This may seem extremely short, but most donors are requiring shorter and shorter proposals. This will help you hone your writing skills.

**Group Participation (10%): Due December 9 at midnight.** You will have an opportunity to provide feedback about your teammates, how they contributed well to your learning and any challenges you faced.

**Class Participation (15%):** As I stated above, this is discussion-based class. Most weeks, at least one class, we will do a deep dive on an evaluation. I will run this like a case, asking you questions about the paper rather than reviewing the paper. Come prepared.

**Requests for Resubmissions:** If you receive below a B- on any assignment, I will allow you to redo the assignment to raise your grade to a B. You can choose this option one time during the quarter.

**Late policy:** Unless arrangements are made in advance, any assignment that is late will receive 10% penalty for each day late.

**Academic Integrity:** All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Among other things, this means that students shall not represent another's work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage. All students suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Harris Dean of Students for investigation and adjudication. The disciplinary process can result in sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University. In addition to disciplinary sanctions, I will impose a grade penalty of 0 on the assignment and cannot earn higher than a C in the course for students who have committed academic dishonesty. The Harris policy and procedures related to academic integrity can be found at <https://harris.uchicago.edu/gateways/current-students/policies>. The University of Chicago Policy on Academic Honesty & Plagiarism can be found at <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/>

**Use of Artificial Intelligence (Adapted from PPHA 31941, Behavioral Science and Public Policy, Spring 2024):** AI tools offer valuable assistance in writing legibly, research support and idea generation. However, these tools are not substitutes for your intellectual engagement with the material. You are permitted to use AI tools as supplementary aids for refining your ideas, finding research material, and editing language to help with translation, spelling, grammar, and improving sentence flow. No more than 20% of any paragraph or assignment may be generated using AI tools.

Relying on these tools beyond this violates the principles of academic integrity described above, and will be addressed as such. You are fully responsible for the content they generate. You should review and edit any generated content to avoid inaccurate information and copyright infringement.

All instances where AI tools are used must be acknowledged. When submitting an assignment in which you used an AI tool, please add a disclosure statement at the end of the assignment which:

- Names the tool(s) used
- Describe use (refining initial ideas, providing research insights, improving your writing, etc.)
- Explains how you further modified the AI-generated content
- Offers a brief reflection of how using the tool helped you learn.

*Example AI Disclosure: To check how a student may use ChatGPT to complete an assignment, I prompted ChatGPT with the assignment instructions. I adjusted the assignment based on this feedback. I then asked ChatGPT to review the revised assignment and see if there were ways to make it more difficult for ChatGPT. Using ChatGPT assisted in me in crafting assignments that would require students to use the intellectual prowess and creativity.*

**Electronics Policy:** As this is a course about evidence-informed policy, I have chosen to make an evidence-informed policy about electronics. There is now considerable evidence (see, for example, [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) that the use of electronics in classrooms has adverse impacts on learning. *To optimize the classroom experience, I am restricting the use of electronic screens (laptops, phones) in their classrooms, with exceptions for students with a documented Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation. Students may use tablets that lie flat, and take notes, read PDFs, etc.*

**Pass/Fail Option:** Students who wish to take the course pass/fail rather than for a letter grade must use the Harris Pass/Fail request form (<https://harris.uchicago.edu/form/pass-fail>) and must meet the Harris deadline, which is generally 9am on the Monday of the 5th week of courses. Students who take the course pass/fail must attend class meetings and turn in all assignments, achieving marks on assignments that are overall commensurate with at least a C- letter grade.

**ADA student accommodations:** The University's policies regarding students with disabilities are available [here](#). Students who have disability accommodations awarded by the University Student Disability Services Office should inform the Harris Dean of Students office by the end of the first week of class. The Harris Dean of Students Office will work with the student and instructor to coordinate the students' accommodations implementation.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** The Harris School welcomes, values, and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and we believe that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the expression and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. The University and the Harris School have developed distinct but overlapping principles and guidelines to insure that we remain a place where difficult issues are discussed with kindness and respect for all.

- The University's policies are available [here](#). Specifically, the University identifies the freedom of expression as being "vital to our shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge, as is the right of all members of the community to explore new ideas and learn from one another. To preserve an environment of spirited and open debate, we should all have the opportunity to contribute to intellectual exchanges and participate fully in the life of the University."
- The Harris School's commitments to lively, principled, and respectful engagement are available [here](#): "Consistent with the University of Chicago's commitment to open discourse and free expression, Harris encourages members of the leadership, faculty, student body, and administrative staff to respect and engage with others of differing backgrounds or perspectives, even when the ideas or insights shared may be viewed as unpopular or controversial." We foster thought-provoking discourse by encouraging community members not only to speak freely about all issues but also to listen carefully and respectfully to the views of others.

**Class Recordings:** We will record classes for those unable to attend. They will be posted after class.

**Recorded material policy:** The University has developed specific policies and procedures regarding the use of video/audio recordings: these policies are explicitly described in the University's [student manual](#) as well as in the guidelines for instructors available [here](#). A couple of points I want to highlight here:

*By attending course sessions, students acknowledge that:*

- i. They will not: (i) record, share, or disseminate University of Chicago course sessions, videos, transcripts, audio, or chats; (ii) retain such materials after the end of the course; or (iii) use such materials for any purpose other than in connection with participation in the course.*
- ii. They will not share links to University of Chicago course sessions with any persons not authorized to be in the course session. Sharing course materials with persons authorized to be in the relevant course is permitted. Syllabi, handouts, slides, and other documents may be shared at the discretion of the instructor.*
- iii. Course recordings, content, and materials may be covered by copyrights held by the University, the instructor, or third parties. Any unauthorized use of such recordings or course materials may violate such copyrights.*
- iv. Any violation of this policy will be referred to the Area Dean of Students.*

## Course Schedule and Readings (or podcasts, videos)

Resource for the course: [https://macartan.github.io/i/notes/rct\\_faqs.html](https://macartan.github.io/i/notes/rct_faqs.html)

- Here is Macartan Humphrey's take to help practitioners read RCTs. We'll hit on a number of these points throughout the course.

### Recommended books:

Stefan Dercon (2022). *Gambling on Development*. NY: Hurst. Easily bought from your bookstore. If you plan to have a career in development, it's a must read.

Sendil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir (2013). *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*. New York: Henry Holt Times Books.

## January 6: Overview of Course and Types of Evidence

Read: Ruth Levine, "The Moral Case for Evidence in Policy Making" <https://hewlett.org/moral-case-evidence-policy-making/>

Heidi McAnnally-Linz, Bethany Park & Radha Rajkotia (2021). Putting Evidence to Use: [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/putting\\_evidence\\_to\\_use](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/putting_evidence_to_use)

CGD: Breakthrough to Policy Use: <https://pubs.cgdev.org/evidence-to-impact/index.html> (we will come back to this repeatedly)

### Optional:

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/passing-baton-data-and-evidence>

## January 8: Use of Behavioral Science in International Development

### Case: Scarcity in India

Reading: Mani, Mullainathan S. Shafir E. Zhao J., A. "Poverty Impede Cognitive Function." *Science* 341 (2013): 976–980. <https://shafir.scholar.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf4226/files/povertyimpedescognitivfunction.pdf>

## January 13: No Class

## January 15: What is (Good Enough) Evidence?

### Case: Deworming

Miguel, Edward and Kremer, Michael (2004). Worms: Identifying Impacts on Education and Health in the Presence of Treatment Externalities. *Econometrica*, Vol. 72, No. 1, , 159–217: [https://cega.berkeley.edu/assets/cega\\_research\\_projects/1/Identifying-Impacts-on-Education-and-Health-in-the-Presence-of-Treatment-Externalities.pdf](https://cega.berkeley.edu/assets/cega_research_projects/1/Identifying-Impacts-on-Education-and-Health-in-the-Presence-of-Treatment-Externalities.pdf)



*Skim:* Hamory, Joan, Edward Miguel, Michael Walker, Michael Kremer, and Sarah Baird. (2021). "Twenty Year Economic Impacts of Deworming", PNAS.  
<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2023185118>

de Silva N, Ahmed B-N, Casapia M, de Silva HJ, Gyapong J, Malecela M, et al. (2015) Cochrane Reviews on Deworming and the Right to a Healthy, Worm-Free Life. PLoS Negl Trop Dis 9(10): e0004203.  
<https://journals.plos.org/plosntds/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pntd.0004203&type=printable>

Podcast (only listen to after reading): <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-worm-wars/id1535408667?i=1000567966538>

#### January 20: Ethics and usefulness of experimental evidence

**Case:** Coville, A et al (2020). "Enforcing Payment for Water and Sanitation Services in Nairobi's Slums."  
[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w27569/w27569.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27569/w27569.pdf)

Muller, S., Chelwa, G., and Hoffman, N. (2019): <https://qz.com/africa/1766686/the-problem-with-economists-using-randomized-trials-in-africa/>

Kabeer, N: <https://frompoverty.oxfam.org.uk/naila-kabeer-on-why-randomized-controlled-trials-need-to-include-human-agency/> (includes podcast)

Deaton, A. Limitations of randomized controlled trials: <https://voxeu.org/article/limitations-randomised-controlled-trials> (Links to an external site.)

Rao, V. (2020). Evidence-based development needs a diversity of tools, with a bottom-up process of "embedded" dialogue. World Development.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304723>

Optional:

Deaton, A. and Cartwright, N. (2018). *Understanding and misunderstanding randomized controlled trials*. <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0277953617307359?token=BF7F8A345E4D6B26AEE3CE172BFB6894E8B26443D8724551336CD6DB801DEC25CB217F2137F2B097531B27977F516824> (Links to an external site.)

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/impoverished-economics-unpacking-economics-nobel-prize/>

**Commented [MOU1]:** @Vitor—I found a link to a published version, but without the supplementary materials. Can you see if you can find it through the library?  
[https://direct.mit.edu/rest/article-abstract/doi/10.1162/rest\\_a\\_01379/117913/Financing-Municipal-Water-and-Sanitation-Services?redirectedFrom=fulltext](https://direct.mit.edu/rest/article-abstract/doi/10.1162/rest_a_01379/117913/Financing-Municipal-Water-and-Sanitation-Services?redirectedFrom=fulltext)

**Commented [RW2]:** @jade—can you make sure the most recent of this is used.

Rao, V: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X19304723>

## January 22: Elements of Program and Policy Design

Theories of Change Readings:

Brown, A. (May 2016). What is this thing called “Theory of Change”  
<https://www.annmurraybrown.com/post/2016/03/09/what-is-this-thing-called-theory-of-change>

Examples from DFID:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a66ed915d622c000703/Appendix\\_3\\_ToC\\_Examples.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a66ed915d622c000703/Appendix_3_ToC_Examples.pdf)

**Case:** Contact Theory and Peacebuilding

Mousa, S. (2020). Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq. *Science* 369 (6505), 866-870.

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/369/6505/866.full.pdf>

- Podcast: <https://www.scopeconditionspodcast.com/episodes/episode-01salmamoussa>

## January 27: Use of Descriptive Evidence

Case: Education in Afghanistan

Burde, D & Khan, J. (2016). Will You Send Your Daughter to School? Norms, Violence, and Girls' Education in Uruzgan, Afghanistan. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol 2, No 1 (December 2016), pp 42 - 80. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Farchive.nyu.edu%2Fbitstream%2F2451%2F39648%2F2%2FJEIE.V2.Burde\_and\_Kan.Dec%252016.pdf&clen=338873

Burde, Dana, Joel Middleton & Cyrus Samii. (2019). *The Assessment of Learning Outcomes and Social Effects of Community-Based Education: A Randomized Field Experiment in Afghanistan, Phase Two Outcomes Report*. New York: Steinhardt School, New York University.

- Summary: <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/ihdsc/projects/alse/findings/reports>
- Other summaries of findings (optional):  
<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/ihdsc/projects/alse/findings/research-briefs>

Pritchett, L. & Sandfeur, J. (2013). Context Matters for Size: Why External Validity Claims and Development Practice Don't Mix. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/context-matters-size-why-external-validity-claims-and-development-practice-dont-mix>

### January 29: Usefulness of whose evidence?

Thomas, C. C., & Markus, H.R. (2023). Enculturating the science of international development: Beyond the WEIRD independent paradigm. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 54(2), 195-214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220221221128211>.

Pailey, R. N. (2020). De-centring the “White Gaze” of Development. *Development and Change*, 51(3), 729–745.  
<http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eoh&AN=1857965&site=eds-live&scope=site>

A related video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liveK8wnsI0>

Corsetti, Lea (2022) Decolonising Evaluation Practice: Is it time for an increased conversation in Europe? <https://europeanevaluation.org/2022/07/13/decolonising-evaluation-practice-is-it-time-for-an-increased-conversation-in-europe/>

### February 3: What to do with Mixed Results? How should we adapt programs?

Case: Cash

Haushofer, J., & Shapiro, J. (2016). The Short-Term Impact of Unconditional Cash Transfers to the Poor: Experimental Evidence from Kenya. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 131(4), 1973–2042.  
[https://www.princeton.edu/haushofer/publications/Haushofer\\_Shapiro\\_UCT\\_QJE\\_2016.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/haushofer/publications/Haushofer_Shapiro_UCT_QJE_2016.pdf)

Haushofer, J. & Shapiro, J. (2018b). The Long-Term Impact of Unconditional Cash Transfers to the Poor: Experimental Evidence from Kenya. Working Paper.  
[https://www.princeton.edu/haushofer/publications/Haushofer\\_Shapiro\\_UCT2\\_2018.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/haushofer/publications/Haushofer_Shapiro_UCT2_2018.pdf)

### February 5: When is a null really a null? Operationalization of Concepts

Case CDD

Humphreys, M. , Sanchez de la Sierra, R., and Van der Windt, P. (2019). Exporting democratic practices: Evidence from a village governance intervention in Eastern Congo. *Journal of Development Economics*. Volume 140, Pages 279-301.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304387818305078>

Skim to compare with academic article:

[http://3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/ie7\\_1.pdf](http://3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/ie7_1.pdf)

Bennett, S. and D'Onofrio, A. (2015). Community-Driven? Concepts, Clarity and Choices for Community-Driven Development in Conflict-Affected Countries. IRC.

<https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/567/communitydrivenlowresfinalshereandalyoscia0.pdf>

EGAP, 10 Things Your Null Might Mean: <https://egap.org/resource/10-things-your-null-result-might-mean/>

### **February 10: Scaling #1: Issues of Implementation**

Case: Community Health

Björkman, M and J Svensson (2009), "Power to the people: Evidence from a randomised field experiment on community-based monitoring in Uganda", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(2): 735-769.: <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/124/2/735/1905094>

Björkman Nyqvist, M, D de Walquen and J Svensson (2017), "Experimental evidence on the long-run impact of community based monitoring", *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9(1): 33-69.  
<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20150027>

Raffler, P., Posner., D and Parkerson. D. (Forthcoming). The Weakness of Bottom-Up Accountability: Experimental Evidence from the Ugandan Health Sector. *Journal of Politics*. <https://danielnposner.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/RPP-ACT-Health-240214.pdf>

Summary of study: <https://voxdev.org/topic/health-education/does-bottom-accountability-work-evidence-uganda>

### **February 12th: Scaling #2: Issues of Targeting**

**Case: Urban-Rural Migration in Bangladesh**

Mobarack, M., Levy, K., and Reiamo, M. (Nov 14, 2017). The path to scale: From randomized control trial to scalable program. VoxDev.

<https://voxdev.org/topic/methods-measurement/path-scale-randomised-control-trial-scalable-programme>

- Related study (skim):  
[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w23929/w23929.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w23929/w23929.pdf)

Mobarack, M., Levy, K., and Reiamo, M. (Nov 21, 2017). The path to scale: Replication, equilibrium effects and new settings. VoxDev. <https://voxdev.org/topic/methods-measurement/path-scale-replication-general-equilibrium-effects-and-new-settings>

Piper, K. (Nov. 29, 2019). A charity just admitted that its program wasn't working. That's a big deal. <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/29/18114585/poverty-charity-randomized-controlled-trial-evidence-action>

Mobarak, M. Davis, C.A. (2020).  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X19304668>

Optional Readings:

DellaVigna, S. & Linos, E. (2020) "RCTs to Scale: Comprehensive Evidence from Two Nudge Units"  
[https://www.nber.org/papers/w27594?utm\\_campaign=ntwh&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=ntwg19](https://www.nber.org/papers/w27594?utm_campaign=ntwh&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ntwg19)

Summary: <https://www.bi.team/blogs/do-nudges-actually-work/>

Al-Ubaydli, A et al (2019). THE SCIENCE OF USING SCIENCE: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE THREATS TO SCALING EXPERIMENTS.

[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w25848/w25848.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25848/w25848.pdf)

Murdoch, J.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X1930467X>

**February 17<sup>th</sup>: Generalizability vs Context Specificity**

Case: Community Health, Redux

[Darin Christensen](#), Oeindrila Dube, Johannes Haushofer, Bilal Siddiqi, Maarten Voors (2021). [Building Resilient Health Systems: Experimental Evidence from Sierra Leone and the 2014 Ebola Outbreak](#). *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Bates, M. A., & Glennerster, R. (2017). The Generalizability Puzzle. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 15(3), 50–54. <https://doi.org/10.48558/EYY5-3S89>  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_generalizability\\_puzzle](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_generalizability_puzzle)

The Metaketa Initiative; Chapter 2 (2019). In T. Dunning, G. Grossman, M. Humphreys, S. Hyde, C. McIntosh, & G. Nellis (Eds.), *Information, Accountability, and Cumulative Learning: Lessons from Metaketa I* (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics, pp. 16-49). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108381390.003 (On Canvas Reserve)

**February 19<sup>th</sup>: Dealing with Bundled Programs**

Case: Graduation Program

<https://www.poverty-action.org/impact/ultra-poor-graduation-model>

Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, William Parient, Jeremy Shapiro, Bram Thuysbaert, and Christopher Udry. 2015. "A Multi-faceted Program Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries." *Science* 348(6236), doi: 10.1126/science. 1260799.

Banerjee, Abhijit, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, Hannah Trachtman, Christopher Udry, 2018. "Unpacking a Multi-Faceted Program to Build Sustainable Income for the Very Poor." [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w24271/w24271.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w24271/w24271.pdf)

Optional:

Quisumbing, A. et al. (2020). *Randomized controlled trials of multi-sectoral programs: Lessons from development research*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304711> (Links to an external site.)

#### February 24th: Systems Thinking

Case: Training vs Cash in Rwanda

McIntosh, Craig, and Zaitlin, Andrew (2020). *Using Household Grants to Benchmark the Cost-Effectiveness of USAID Workforce Readiness Program*. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2009.01749.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

[Summary] Benchmarking Cash to an Employment Program in Rwanda <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/benchmarking-cash-employment-program-rwanda> (Links to an external site.)

Examining New Data on Workforce Development (2020). [https://www.edc.org/examining-new-data-workforce-development?utm\\_source=edc&utm\\_medium=tw&utm\\_content=cash&utm\\_campaign=smedcorg](https://www.edc.org/examining-new-data-workforce-development?utm_source=edc&utm_medium=tw&utm_content=cash&utm_campaign=smedcorg) (Links to an external site.)

Ricigliano, Rob (2021). The Complexity Spectrum <https://blog.kumu.io/the-complexity-spectrum-e12efae133b0>

#### February 26th: Deciding to Use Evidence

Case: Effective Altruism

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/08/15/the-reluctant-prophet-of-effective-altruism>

<https://blog.givewell.org/2022/08/17/changes-to-top-charity-criteria/>

Give Directly's response: <https://www.givedirectly.org/giving-directly-still-means-giving-well/>

<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2022/8/8/23150496/effective-altruism-sam-bankman-fried-dustin-moskovitz-billionaire-philanthropy-cryptocurrency>

### March 3rd: Political and Organizational Barriers and to Evidence Use

Das., S. (2020). *(Don't) leave politics out of it: Reflections on public policies, experiments, and*

*interventions.* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X19304413> (Links to an external site.)

Dreze, J. (2020). *Policy beyond*

*evidence.* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X19304462> (Links to an external site.)

Michael Callen, Adnan Khan, Asim I. Khwaja, Asad Liaqat and Emily Myers (2017). *These 3 barriers make it hard for policymakers to use the evidence that development researchers produce* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/13/these-3-barriers-make-it-hard-for-policymakers-to-use-the-evidence-that-development-researchers-produce/> (Links to an external site.)

Nastios, A. (2010). *The Clash of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development.*

[https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/1424271\\_file\\_Natsios\\_Counterbureaucracy.pdf](https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/1424271_file_Natsios_Counterbureaucracy.pdf)

Dercon, S. Chapter 12-13

### March 5th: Psychological Barriers to Evidence Use/Wrap Up

- Summary of Difficult Conversations (Stone, Heen & Patton): <https://charles.io/difficult-conversations/>. Focus on the Identity Conversation
- [Baggini](#), Julian (2018). Stories help us understand the world—but our human impulse towards narrative has a dark side. Prospect Magazine. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/philosophy/how-the-human-craving-for-narrative-can-lead-us-astray%E2%80%A8>
- Other readings TBD

Final Paper Due March 14 at midnight