Evaluating Social Programs with Randomized Experiments

ECTS : 3

Description du contenu de l'enseignement :

Randomized experiments are powerful tools for evaluating the impact of social policies and programs. This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the design, implementation, and interpretation of randomized evaluations, with an emphasis on their role in informing evidence-based policymaking.

The first part of the course covers core methodological foundations: When and why are randomized evaluations appropriate? What constitutes a well-designed experiment? How do we determine sample sizes and select and measure outcomes? We will also examine common threats to internal and external validity, and explore strategies to address them.

The second part of the course focuses on practical implementation. Drawing on real-world case studies, we will discuss the opportunities and limitations of conducting randomized evaluations, with attention to logistical, ethical, and political considerations.

A key component of the course is a group project where students design and present their own randomized evaluation, applying the concepts and methods covered throughout the course.

Outline:

Lecture 1: Introduction to randomized impact evaluations: why randomize?

Lecture 2: Theory of change and measurement.

Lecture 3: How to randomize and calculate sample size?

Lecture 4: Managing threats to internal and external validity

Lecture 5: An evaluation from A to Z: A cash transfer program for education in Morocco

Lecture 6: Looking for the « big pictures »: advantages and limitations of RCTs to fight poverty

Lecture 7: Group presentations and conclusion

Compétence à acquérir :

Hands-on knowledge of how to design and implement randomized evaluations, and how to apply their findings to inform decision-making and generate actionable insights.

Bibliographie, lectures recommandées :

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo (2011): “Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty”. (Version Française disponible sous le titre « Repenser la pauvreté »)

Glennerster, Takavarasha: “Running Randomized Evaluations: a Practical Guide”, Princeton University Press, 2013.