

# PhD (field-)Course in “Behavioral and Experimental Economics”

*Academic year 2025-2026*

## Instructors

### Mariana Blanco

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Associate Professor of Economics, Dept. of Economics & Statistics “Cognetti de Martiis”, UniTo. Director of the Center for LabOratory Simulation and Experimental Research, CLOSER, UniTo. Collegio Carlo Alberto, Research fellow.

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## Duration

- **Total Hours:** 24h [12+12]
- **Third term:** Feb-March 2026 [*tentative*]

## Course Description

The primary objective of this course is to provide a comprehensive introduction to **experimental methodology** in economics.

By the end of the course, students will have acquired the fundamental tools necessary to understand the existing experimental literature, critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of experimental research papers, and **design and conduct experiments** as part of their research projects.

This course is open to graduate students enrolled in the Vilfredo Pareto Ph.D. in Economics program and is aimed at students interested in experimental economics, including **online, lab, and lab-in-the-field experiments**. In addition to its methodological focus, the course is also a **field-course** that touches upon key topics such as **social preferences and norms, political economy, and environmental economics**.

It is particularly beneficial for students who plan to conduct experiments as part of **their research projects** and for those who wish to critically engage with experimental literature in their field of specialization.

No prior knowledge of experimental economics is required, but a basic understanding of statistics and econometrics is recommended.

# Grading

**Final exam** – A take-home assignment requiring students to propose a research question and design an experimental study to address it. The experimental design must demonstrate mastery of methodological tools discussed in the course and should be grounded in relevant literature. The final assignment is due within two weeks of the course's conclusion (negotiable) and must be presented in class.

## Course Outline [*tentative*]

### **Part 1 – Experimental methods and applications** [Instructor: *M. Blanco*]

**Lecture 1:** Introduction + Experimental Methods

**Lecture 2:** Experimental Methods + Why do we do experiments in Social Sciences

**Lecture 3:** Measuring Social preferences

**Lecture 4:** Social preferences models

**Lecture 6:** Discrimination

**Lecture 5:** Measuring Social Norms

### **Part 2 – Online survey experiments and applications** [Instructor: *P. Conzo*]

**Lecture 1:** What do we mean by (and why do we need to run) online survey experiments?

**Lecture 2:** Some tips on (careful) planning and running survey experiments

**Lecture 3:** Response biases

**Lecture 4:** Survey experiments in Political Economy

**Lecture 5:** Survey experiments in Environmental Economics

**Lecture 6:** Survey experiments on Social Preferences

# Readings [tentative]

## Part 1

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- Bursztyn, L., González, A. L., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2020). "Misperceived social norms: Women working outside the home in Saudi Arabia". *American Economic Review*, 110(10), 2997-3029.
- Aycinena, D., Rentschler, L., Beranek, B., & Schulz, J. F. (2022). "Social norms and dishonesty across societies." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(31), e2120138119.
- -Bicchieri, C., & Xiao, E. (2009). "Do the right thing: but only if others do so." *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 22(2), 191-208.
- Krupka, E. L., & Weber, R. A. (2013). "Identifying social norms using coordination games: Why does dictator game sharing vary?" *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 11(3), 495-524.
- Aycinena, D., Bogliacino, F., & Kimbrough, E. O. (2024). "Measuring norms: Assessing the threat of social desirability bias to the Bicchieri and Xiao elicitation method". *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 222, 225-239.

## Part 2

- Fetzter, T., Hensel, L., Hermle, J., & Roth, C. (2020). “Coronavirus perceptions and economic anxiety.” *Review of Economics and Statistics*.
- Arechar, A. A., Gächter, S., & Molleman, L. (2018). “Conducting interactive experiments online.” *Experimental Economics*, 21(1), 99–131.
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- Barrera, O., Guriev, S., Henry, E., & Zhuravskaya, E. (2020). “Facts, alternative facts, and fact-checking in times of post-truth politics.” *Journal of Public Economics*, 182, 104123.
- Callen, M., Ferman, B., Gulzar, S., Hasanain, A., & Yuchtman, N. (2020). “Political identity: Experimental evidence on anti-Americanism in Pakistan.” *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 18(5), 2532–2560.
- Egorov, G., Fiorin, S., & Burszty, L. (2020). “From extreme to mainstream: The erosion of social norms.” *American Economic Review*, 110(11), 3522–3548.
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- Mertens, S., Herberz, M., Hahnel, U. J. J., & Brosch, T. (2022). “The effectiveness of nudging: A meta-analysis of choice architecture interventions across behavioral domains.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(1), e2107346118.
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