

Economics of prosocial behavior

Winter semester 2024/2025

Lecturer: **Prof. Dr. Mark A. Andor** ([Link](#))

Contact: andor@rwi-essen.de

(Please always send requests to this contact email)

Language: **English**

Group size: 20

Application: Please send an email to Mark Andor (andor@rwi-essen.de) by **October 2, 2024** to apply.

The theme:

How can we trigger prosocial behavior?

Engaging in prosocial behavior is a fundamental human ability that plays a crucial role in addressing societal challenges. Whether it is tackling climate change, reducing global poverty, or fighting pandemics, prosocial behavior is always a key part of the solution.

In this course, we will discuss (i) what prosocial behavior is, (ii) studies that investigate how prosocial behavior, such as donating money and blood, volunteering or environmentally friendly behavior, can be promoted, and (iii) studies that highlight the current challenges of experimental studies.

Learning outcomes

Students improve their ability to understand and evaluate scientific literature. They also deepen their knowledge of behavioral, experimental and econometric methods by studying the methodology of relevant peer-reviewed papers. During the seminar, students learn about current topics in the fields of behavioral economics, experimental economics and the economics of prosocial behavior, learn how to write a term paper and improve their presentation skills. In particular, students will understand how scientific papers are written, how to identify weaknesses in the current literature and how to develop their own research ideas. Students should be enabled to conduct their own research, an important prerequisite for writing their master's thesis.

Content

The aim of this seminar is to prepare students to critically assess topics in behavioral economics, experimental economics and the economics of prosocial behavior, in particular from an empirical perspective. Seminar participants are expected to make a presentation and write a term paper on a topic agreed upon with the instructor. Beyond summarizing and evaluating the literature, the studies and empirical methods should be examined and critiqued to identify where gaps in knowledge exist. In particular, students are expected to develop and outline their own research idea.

Evaluation criteria

The assessment consists of two components: a presentation and the seminar paper. Participation in the seminar is mandatory.

(1) Presentation (35%)

- Prepare a presentation on your topic, followed by a group discussion.
- Present your topic paper:
 - o Research motivation
 - o Background
 - o Method
 - o Results
 - o Interpretations and policy relevance
 - o Limitations of the study
 - o Develop and present your own idea(s) for further research.
- Presentation slides must be sent in advance as a PDF. Send your presentation as a PDF to: andor@rwi-essen.de one week before the presentation.

(2) Seminar paper (65%)

Write a seminar paper on the assigned topic in which you discuss the given paper, including its limitations, and present your own ideas for further research. The paper should be 5000 words or less, which is approximately 9-10 pages of text (excluding title page, references, and appendix).

IMPORTANT DATES

Application

Please send an email to Mark Andor (andor@rwi-essen.de) by **October 2, 2024** to apply for the seminar. After that you will get further information about the **Kick-Off seminar**.

Please look in advance at the potential seminar paper topics, see list below, and think about your preferences (1, 2 and 3).

Kick-Off seminar (virtual):

Tuesday, October 8 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Introductory meeting:

Friday, November 8 from 09:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Room at RUB: GD 03/218

Q&A I (virtual, optional):

Tuesday, December 17 (by appointment)

Presentations I:

Friday, January 10

Room: GD 03/218

(exact schedule to be announced)

Presentations II:

Friday, January 17

Room: GD 03/218

(exact schedule to be announced)

Presentations III:

Friday, January 24

Room: GD 03/218

(exact schedule to be announced)

Q&A II (virtual, optional):

Tuesday, February 11 (by appointment)

Deadlines for submitting deliverables

Send your **presentation** as a PDF to: andor@rwi-essen.de one week before the presentation.

Please send your **seminar paper** to: andor@rwi-essen.de by **Thursday, February 27**.

TOPICS

1. Bénabou, R., & Tirole, J. (2006). Incentives and prosocial behavior. *American Economic Review*, 96(5), 1652-1678.
2. Landry, C. E., Lange, A., List, J. A., Price, M. K., & Rupp, N. G. (2006). Toward an understanding of the economics of charity: Evidence from a field experiment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 121(2), 747-782.
3. Imas, A. (2014). Working for the "warm glow": On the benefits and limits of prosocial incentives. *Journal of Public Economics*, 114, 14-18.
4. Hungerman, D. M., & Ottoni-Wilhelm, M. (2021). Impure impact giving: Theory and evidence. *Journal of Political Economy*, 129(5), 1553-1614.
5. Samek, A., & Longfield, C. (2023). Do thank-you calls increase charitable giving? expert forecasts and field experimental evidence. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 15(2), 103-124.
6. Adena, M., Hakimov, R., & Huck, S. (2024). Charitable giving by the poor: A field experiment in Kyrgyzstan. *Management Science*, 70(1), 633-646.
7. Stutzer, A., Goette, L., & Zehnder, M. (2011). Active decisions and prosocial behaviour: a field experiment on blood donation. *The Economic Journal*, 121(556), F476-F493.
8. Lacetera, N., Macis, M., & Slonim, R. (2012). Will there be blood? Incentives and displacement effects in pro-social behavior. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 4(1), 186-223.
9. Goette, L., & Tripodi, E. (2021). Social influence in prosocial behavior: Evidence from a large-scale experiment. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 19(4), 2373-2398.
10. Al-Ubaydli, O., & Lee, M. (2011). Can tailored communications motivate environmental volunteers? A natural field experiment. *American Economic Review*, 101(3), 323-328.
11. Mertins, V., & Walter, C. (2021). In absence of money: a field experiment on volunteer work motivation. *Experimental Economics*, 24(3), 952-984.
12. Gallus, J. (2017). Fostering public good contributions with symbolic awards: A large-scale natural field experiment at Wikipedia. *Management Science*, 63(12), 3999-4015.
13. Byrne, David P., Lorenz Goette, Leslie A. Martin, Amy Miles, Alana Jones, Samuel Schob, Thorsten Staake, and Verena Tiefenbeck. "How nudges create habits: theory and evidence from a field experiment." *Available at SSRN 3974371* (2023).
14. Andor, M. A., Gerster, A., & Peters, J. (2022). Information campaigns for residential energy conservation. *European Economic Review*, 144, 104094.
15. Alt, Marius, Hendrik Bruns, and Nives DellaValle. "The more the better? Synergies of prosocial interventions and effects on behavioural spillovers." *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* (2024): 103061.
16. Ito, K., Ida, T., & Tanaka, M. (2018). Moral suasion and economic incentives: Field experimental evidence from energy demand. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 10(1), 240-267.
17. Milkman, Katherine L., Sean F. Ellis, Dena M. Gromet, Youngwoo Jung, Alex S. Luscher, Rayyan S. Mobarak, Madeline K. Paxson et al. "Megastudy shows that reminders boost vaccination but adding free rides does not." *Nature* 631, no. 8019 (2024): 179-188.
18. Chetty, Raj, Emmanuel Saez, and László Sándor. "What policies increase prosocial behavior? An experiment with referees at the Journal of Public Economics." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28, no. 3 (2014): 169-188.
19. Maniadis, Zacharias, Fabio Tufano, and John A. List. 2014. "One Swallow Doesn't Make a Summer: New Evidence on Anchoring Effects." *American Economic Review*, 104 (1): 277-90.
20. Al-Ubaydli, O., List, J. A., & Suskind, D. L. (2017). What can we learn from experiments? Understanding the threats to the scalability of experimental results. *American Economic Review*, 107(5), 282-286.
21. Vivalt, E. (2020). How much can we generalize from impact evaluations? *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 18(6), 3045-3089.