

# Economics of sustainable behavior

Summer semester 2025

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

Contact: [andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de)

(Please always send requests to this contact email)

Language: **English**

Registration: Please send an email with the following information to Mark Andor ([andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de)) by April 7, 2025, to register:

- Surname
- First name
- Email address
- Matriculation number
- Module application (Verwendung des Moduls)
  - Economic Policy Consulting MSc.
    - Environmental, Resource and Energy Economics
    - Elective module
  - Management and Economics MSc.
    - Energy and Environmental Economics
    - General Economics
  - Finance, Accounting, Auditing, Controlling & Taxation MSc.
    - Elective module (max. 15 ECTS)
  - Sales Management MSc.
    - Elective module (max. 20 ECTS)

To cancel your registration, please send an e-mail to Mark Andor ([andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de)) **until 6 June**. Cancellation after this date is no longer possible.

The theme this year:

## ***How can we trigger sustainable behavior?***

### **General Idea:**

Research from the fields of economics and psychology suggest that behavioral, information and monetary interventions can be effective tools to promote sustainable resource use. In this seminar we will provide an insight into the existing empirical evidence for interventions that are primarily aimed at resource-conserving behavior. In the last decade in particular, a growing strand of research has produced very interesting studies at the intersection of behavioral economics, resource use, and sustainability. In this seminar, we will look at the current literature by reviewing exciting studies from the last few years in detail (what are the results, what is the contribution to the literature, what is the methodology, why is the study special, what can we learn from it, what was the influence on the literature). Around these papers, we will additionally briefly review the literature before ("standing on the shoulders of giants") and after the publications. We will also discuss avenues for future research. We will discuss studies on sustainable lifestyles especially in the areas of mobility (transportation) and energy as well as water and food consumption.

### **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 behavioral, experimental and sustainability economics, learn 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, experimental and sustainability economics, 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 15-minute 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 and first steps for further research.
- Please use about 10-15 slides for the whole presentation
- Presentation slides must be sent in advance as a PDF. Send your presentation as a PDF to: [andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de) on the Monday before the presentation. Please save the file according to the following principle: Number of the project\_Surname\_FirstName, e.g. 04\_Musterfrau\_Maxima.

### (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 and first steps 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

### Registration

Please send an email to Mark Andor ([andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de)) by **April 7, 2025** to register. 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):

**Wednesday, April 9 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

### Introductory meeting:

**Friday, May 9 from 9:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.**

**Room at RUB: GD 03/512**

### Q&A I (virtual, optional):

**Friday, May 23 (by appointment)**

### Presentations I:

**Friday, June 27**

**Room at RUB: GD 03/218**

(exact schedule to be announced)

### Presentations II:

**Friday, July 4**

**Room at RUB: GD 03/218**

(exact schedule to be announced)

### Q&A II (virtual, optional):

**Friday, July 18 (by appointment)**

## Deadlines for submitting deliverables

Send your **presentation** as a PDF to: [andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de) on the Monday before the presentation.

Please save the file according to the following principle: Number of the project\_Surname\_FirstName, e.g. 04\_Musterfrau\_Maxima.

Please send your **seminar paper** to: [andor@rwi-essen.de](mailto:andor@rwi-essen.de) by **Friday, August 22**.

## TOPICS

1. Andor, M. A., Gerster, A., Peters, J., & Schmidt, C. M. (2020). Social norms and energy conservation beyond the US. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 103, 102351.
2. Wichman, C. J. (2017). Information provision and consumer behavior: A natural experiment in billing frequency. *Journal of Public Economics*, 152, 13-33.
3. Tiefenbeck, V., Wörner, A., Schöb, S., Fleisch, E., & Staake, T. (2019). Real-time feedback promotes energy conservation in the absence of volunteer selection bias and monetary incentives. *Nature Energy*, 4(1), 35-41.
4. Barahona, N., Otero, C., Otero, S., & Kim, J. (20XX). Equilibrium effects of food labeling policies. *Econometrica*, 91(3), 839-868.
5. Kristal, A. S., & Whillans, A. V. (2020). What we can learn from five naturalistic field experiments that failed to shift commuter behaviour. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(2), 169-176.
6. Andor, M. A., Gerster, A., Gillingham, K. T., & Horvath, M. (2020). Running a car costs much more than people think—stalling the uptake of green travel. *Nature* 580, 453-455.
7. Andor, M. A., Gerster, A., & Peters, J. (2022). Information campaigns for residential energy conservation. *European Economic Review*, 104094.
8. Hintermann, B., Schoeman, B. M., Molloy, J., Götschli, T., Castro, A., Tchernenkova, C., Tomic, U., & Axhausen, K. W. (2022). Pigovian transport pricing in practice (No. 2021/11). *WWZ Working Paper*. Link: [2021\\_11\\_Pigovian Transport Pricing in Practice\\_May2022.pdf](https://www.wwz.ch/working-papers/2021_11_Pigovian_Transport_Pricing_in_Practice_May2022.pdf) ([archive.org](https://www.archive.org))
9. Enke, B., Graeber, T., Oprea, R., & Yang, J. (2024). Behavioral attenuation. *National Bureau of Economic Research* (No. w32973). Link: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w32973>
10. Calel, R., Colmer, J., Dechezleprêtre, A., & Glachant, M. (2025). Do carbon offsets offset carbon?. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 17(1), 1-40.
11. Sejas-Portillo, R., Moro, M., & Stowasser, T. (2025). The Simpler the Better? Threshold Effects of Energy Labels on Property Prices and Energy Efficiency Investments. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 17(1), 41-89.
12. Blonz, J., Palmer, K., Wichman, C. J., & Wietelman, D. C. (2025). Smart thermostats, automation, and time-varying prices. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 17(1), 90-125.