

Applied Econometrics Seminar
May 13, 2024 (Monday)

Speaker:

Jared Rubin

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Joint with Ali Almelhem, Murat Iyigun, Austin Kennedy

Title:

Enlightenment Ideals and Belief in Progress in the Run-up to the Industrial Revolution: A Textual Analysis

Abstract:

We trace the evolution of the language of science, religion, and political economy in the centuries leading to the British Industrial Revolution. Using textual analysis of 173,031 works printed in England between 1500 and 1900, we test whether British culture manifested a belief in progress associated with science and industry. Our analysis yields three main findings. First, there was a separation in the language of science and religion beginning in the late-17th century. Second, volumes using language at the nexus of science and political economy became more progress-oriented during the Enlightenment. Third, volumes using industrial language—especially those at the science-political economy nexus—were more progress-oriented beginning in the 17th century.