E520 Master Seminar: Globalization, Digitalization, and Firm Behavior

Syllabus

1 Lecturers

The lecturers for the seminar are

- Dr. Knut Niemann, knut.niemann@uni-tuebingen.de (KN)
- MSc. Ferdinand Ammon, ferdinand.ammon@uni-tuebingen.de (FA)

2 Overview

Globalization and digitalization reshape economies. How exactly depends on how firms respond to them. In this seminar, we discuss recent research on this topic. The seminar is structured around two broad themes:

1. Globalization and firms
    - Political realignment and international trade*
    - Political shocks and international migration*
    - Slowbalization*
    - Sanction evasion by transit shipments*
    - Boycotts and international trade*
    - Political distance, international trade and sanctions*
2. Digitalization/Automatization and firms
    - AI use in firms and growth
    - AI and firm organization (pure theory topic)
    - Digitalization and the organization of value chains
    - Digitalization and the effect on employment
    - Digitalization and firm productivity*
    - Digitalization and market concentration

Students are encouraged to conduct independent empirical work as an alternative to a literature-based paper. Topics marked with an asterisk * offer the possibility to conduct independent empirical work. Data will be provided.

To earn the 9 ECTS credits of the seminar, we expect you to write a seminar paper and present it in class and participate in the class discussion of other participants' presentations. The paper will account for 75% of the final grade, the presentation for 20%, and participation in class discussions for 5%.

You may express preferences for your topic and will be assigned one at the first meeting of the seminar. You work on your topic and compile a first draft of your paper until approximately three weeks before the submission deadline. At that point, we will have presentation sessions, where you present your first draft and get feedback and ideally provide feedback to other students.

3 Learning goals

Overall, the seminar is designed to prepare students for writing their master thesis. After successful completion of the seminar, students will be able to

- read, understand, and critically assess academic research papers in economics,
- conduct independent research on a given research question (literature-based or empirical),
- communicate and present research findings clearly in writing and oral presentations,
- engage in constructive academic discussion by providing and receiving feedback, and
- develop effective research workflows, including the use of common academic tools (for example, LaTeX, data/code management, data visualization).

4 Prerequisites

For empirical work, students should be familiar with microeconometric methods. Experience with statistical software (for example, Stata or R) is an advantage, but we will provide guidance during the seminar to support students without prior experience.

5 Timeline

We will meet regularly during the semester for paper labs and later on for presentations. In paper labs, we start by working through a research paper so you can acquaint yourself with techniques to extract the research question, methodology, and main results. In later labs, we help you by, for example,

- discussing the structure and progress of your paper
- discussing any questions you might have
- providing detailed feedback after the presentation
- supporting you with understanding the econometrics

The preliminary schedule is as follows.

Event	Date	Lecturer	Start - End	Content
Kick-off	13 Oct.	KN & FA	2-4 p.m.	Assignment of topics
Paper lab 1	27 Oct.	FA	2-4 p.m.	Reading empirical papers
Paper lab 2	10 Nov.	FA	2-4 p.m.	Econometrics refresher
Paper lab 3	24 Nov.	KN	2-4 p.m.	Data and code management
Paper lab 4	8 Dec.	KN	2-4 p.m.	Data visualization & Overleaf/LaTeX
Presentations 1	12 Jan.	KN & FA	2-6 p.m.	First set of presentations
Presentations 2	15 Jan.	KN & FA	9 a.m. - 4 p.m.	Second set of presentations
Paper lab 5	19 Jan.	TBD	2-4 p.m.	Presentation feedback, Q&A
Paper lab 6	2 Feb.	TBD	2-4 p.m.	Presentation feedback, Q&A

All meetings take place in room 209 (in the economics library) in Mohlstraße 36. During the seminar, we aim for direct interaction with and among participating students. In our experience, hybrid or remote participation has not worked sufficiently well for that goal. For that reason, participation is in person only; remote attendance isn't possible.

The **registration period for the exam** on Alma is from **24 November to 8 December 2025**. After registration, withdrawing from the course without a grade is not possible. The **deadline for the submission** of the final seminar paper is **6 February 2026**. Until the submission deadline, and based on the feedback on your presentation, you then revise and finalize your paper. The deadline can be extended, for example, if you fall sick. If you fall sick, please contact your GP and get a written note ("Krankschreibung") and let us know immediately.

6 Formal requirements

To ensure consistency and fairness, all seminar papers and presentations must adhere to the following formal requirements.

6.1 Formal requirements for the paper

The formal requirements for your paper are as follows.

1. Cover page with the following information: Paper title, semester, name of chair, name of supervisor, name of author of paper, course of study, matriculation number.
2. Structure: Table of Contents, Introduction, Main Section(s), Conclusion, possibly endnotes, bibliography, possibly appendix.
3. Length and Layout
    - 50,000 characters (approx. 20 pages, +/- 10% is ok)
    - Line spacing: 1.5
    - Margins: right 4 cm, left, top and bottom 2 cm
    - Font size: 12 pt
    - Format: full justification
    - Typeface: Times New Roman, Arial
4. Document your sources in the text, including pages. Everything that belongs to the "standard knowledge" of economics needs no specific reference (that is, no reference to textbooks).
5. Footnotes preferably at the end of each page (that is, no endnotes if possible).
6. In a literature-based paper, you usually do not need an appendix. If you do, the appendix should not exceed 5 pages (the appendix is not counted towards the 20 pages of the paper); otherwise, consult our paper supervisor.
7. Citations: In the text or footnote, short citations, that is: (Author, Year, Page). In the bibliography, present all cited sources (and only these!) alphabetically.
    - Books: surname, first name(s), initials, (editor) (year), title, subtitle, edition, volume, publisher, place.
    - Journal articles: surname, first name(s) (year) „title of the article", name of the journal, volume, pages.
    - If there are more authors: Surname, name(s), first names surname and first names surname (year) „title of the article", name of the journal, volume, pages
    - Articles in collections: Surname, first name(s), (year) „title of the article" in: surname, first name(s), (editor), (year) title, . . , pages

- Websites with the complete address. If you want to cite search strings, it is sufficient to cite the main page and the exact title, such that the website is findable. Please also cite the date of last access.
- As an example, you can always check the citations on the topic sheets.

8. Except for direct quotations, word-for-word reproduction of essays or word-for-word translation of foreign-language texts is not permitted! Contents of articles must be reproduced in one's own words.

9. Include a signed statement (and table):

> "I hereby declare that I have written this work myself and have not used any sources or resources other than those stated. I have identified texts, ideas, concepts, graphics, etc. taken directly or indirectly from external sources as such and have provided complete references to the respective sources.
> I am aware that the use of texts or content created by means of generative AI does not guarantee their quality and that I am responsible if the use of such tools results in incorrect content, violations of data protection law, copyright law or academic misconduct (for example, plagiarism). I also confirm that I have used generative AI tools as an aid only and that my creative influence predominates in the present work.
> I additionally declare that I have included in this work a table documenting a) the AI tools I used and b) which purpose I have used them for."

To submit your paper, please hand in a printed and bound copy of your paper with us and submit a PDF version via e-mail to us. For papers involving independent empirical work, please also submit your code and data.

6.2 Formal requirements for the presentation

The formal requirements for your presentation are as follows.

1. The presentation should last 30 minutes. Afterwards, there will be a discussion of 10 minutes.
2. You should use slides to support your presentation.
3. The first slide should contain your name and the topic.
4. Please send us your slides via e-mail before the seminar.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for literature search

It is often helpful to start from the references of the research papers or check Google Scholar for papers that cite your research paper.

- Google Scholar: http://scholar.google.com
- Social Science Research Network (SSRN): https://www.ssrn.com/index.cfm/en/

7.2 Recommendations on writing your paper

A very important part of your paper is the introduction. It should motivate the topic, clarify the question, give an outlook on the most important results, place the paper in the literature, and explain the structure of your paper.

7.3 Recommendations on your seminar presentations

1. Give your presentation a clear and logical structure.
    - Expose the main points of the papers and present them briefly and concisely at the beginning of the presentation.
    - Follow a clear and logical structure in your presentation. You can use the structure of your paper as an orientation.
    - Summarize the main points at the end of your presentation and underline your main points once again.
    - A clear and logical structure makes it easier for your audience to follow your presentation.
2. Speak loudly and clearly, and try to build in short breaks in your presentation.
    - The breaks will attract the attention of your audience and you will be able to hear feedback from the audience. Present complex points slowly and repeat them if necessary.
3. Please do not stand with your back to the audience.
4. Make your slides understandable and legible.
    - The font size should not be smaller than 24 pt. Use a large font, especially for mathematical formulas and empirical results.
    - Please do not write too much information on one slide. Do not write information on the slides that you do not want to discuss in your presentation.
    - It is better to write down your talking points in bullets than in whole sentences.
    - For your presentation of 30 minutes, aim for 15 slides. You may include additional material in the backup slides.
5. Stick to the time limit.
6. Please practice your presentation beforehand. The better you know your presentation, the more confident you will feel about it.

8 Grading

8.1 Papers involving independent empirical work

We strongly recommend choosing a topic involving independent empirical work as preparation for your master thesis. After choosing your topic, you will receive references to one or two papers as well as data and a specific empirical task. The literature will help you understand why the empirical task is relevant. In your paper, you are expected to concisely present the content of the paper(s) and to show that you understand their research question, methodology and results. In addition, you are expected to explain your empirical approach and to present your results. You must submit your code and data along with the paper.

A good paper (and presentation) demonstrates that you have a clear understanding of the research question, methodology and main results of the underlying papers, and that you are able to work on the empirical task. An excellent paper (and presentation) (provides ideas on how to use or) uses the data to go beyond the delineated empirical task.

8.2 Purely literature-based topics

After choosing your topic, you will receive references to two to three papers. These papers should be the core of your paper. That is, you are not expected to write a comprehensive literature review on your topic. Instead, you are expected to focus on the papers, understand their research question, methodology and results, and to critically think mainly about them. Additionally, you should put the papers into the research context, discuss their limitations and shortcomings, and provide avenues for future research. If you manage to read more literature and place the papers into context, this is a plus. However, in any case, you have to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the papers, not superficial knowledge.

A good paper (and presentation) demonstrates that you have a clear understanding of the research question, methodology and main results of the underlying papers, and that you are able to critically assess their strengths and weaknesses. An excellent paper (and presentation) includes independent ideas regarding how to push the research frontier forward. Your critique and your ideas are held to a high standard to make them comparable to the independent empirical work conducted in other topics. Please state the theoretical and empirical arguments intuitively and in your own words.