

Name: Chen Zheng

Email: czheng37@wisc.edu

Program/School: Second year PhD student in the Department of Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Courses Taken: Standard first year sequence, including Micro Theory I and II, Macro Theory I and II, Metrics Theory I and II, and a Mathematics for Economists course

Courses Currently Taking:

Industrial Organization: Introduces some of the most important empirical tools in the field to understand firm and consumer behavior using both models and data

Public Economics: General theme is on social interaction, and introduces the micro foundation and identification techniques on various topics such as segregation, neighborhood, network, etc.

Applied Econometric: Links students' preparation in formal econometrics to data, introduces several topics that are important in applied research such as IV, difference-in-difference, regression discontinuity design, etc.

Major: Industrial Organization

Minor: Public, Urban, Real Estate

A Brief Background and General Research Interests:

My research interest in undergraduate was mainly about urban economics, especially in real estate. Under supervision of Professor David Albouy in the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, I finished my undergraduate honor thesis on the effect of Hukou policy change on the housing prices across cities in China – a topic that drives my curiosity for a long time because the Chinese housing market has experienced a huge boom and housing price has skyrocketed.

After undergraduate study, I was hired as a full-time RA by the Department of Real Estate, Wharton School of Business in the University of Pennsylvania. Under the guidance of Professor Joseph Gyourko and Professor Fernando Ferreira, I mainly focused on a project about the U.S. housing foreclosure crisis using panel data evidence of prime and subprime borrowers from 1997 to 2012. There I've experienced the entire process of doing academic research, from the initial data cleaning to the final submission.

In this semester, the Industrial Organization class intrigues me a lot. Before coming to graduate school, I have little background in this field. After diving deeply into this field, I find myself getting more and more interested in it. Until this point, we've covered topics like empirical models of demand and pricing in markets for differentiated products, competitive conduct and mergers, empirical models of market structure and entry. I learned many empirical methods on how to apply these models and tools into different kinds of industries, and how the analysis may be extended to answer counterfactual questions and its implication to public policy.

Other than IO, I am keeping my curiosity in topics relating to Real Estate. I am trying to brainstorm for ideas for my second-year research paper. In particular, I am looking for ideas that lie in the intersection of IO and Real Estate. In fact, I will work as a RA for a professor in the Real Estate Department in Wisconsin next semester. For example, one of my research idea is trying to understand the performance of online platforms in the housing markets, such as Zillow, Trulia, as well as some relatively smaller regional platforms. I see many IO related questions there, such as the effect of entry of one platform on the entire online marketplaces. Is the competition makes the consumers well off? Can we quantify the gains or losses and potentially study how these marketplaces should be designed?

Reason for Application to the NBER Digitization Tutorial Program:

I find NBER Digitization Tutorial very attractive to me, not only it can help me to learn more about how I can implement my research idea, but more importantly, there seems to be an increasing importance of economics of digitization because digitization has coincided with the increased prominence of platforms and marketplaces that connect diverse agents in social and economic activity. I find this program to be particularly connected to IO as well as to my current research interest. Also, in general, I am very curious and excited to learn more about this young frontier area of research. The chance of face-to-face time with current research leaders and their presentations of frontier research will be an amazing platform for young PhD students like me who is yearn for cutting-edge tools and topics in the profession.