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I am writing to apply for the NBER Economics of Digitization tutorial for graduate students. I am currently a second-year PhD student at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In addition to the core first-year classes in Microeconomics, Macroeconomics and Econometrics, I am primarily studying Experimental Economics, with a secondary interest in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics.

My current research interests are in public goods and coordination in games under uncertainty. I also completed an undergraduate honors thesis focusing on the determinants of success in crowdfunding campaigns. In this project, I used data scraped from Kickstarter to examine whether success in the early stages of a crowdfunding campaign (as defined by money contributed or number of backers participating) was a predictor of success in the campaign overall (as defined by money raised, percentage of goal raised, or whether or not the project met its goal). Surprisingly, I found that the most successful projects raised more money on their first day but had fewer first-day backers, suggesting that crowdfunding may be somewhat distinct from either threshold public goods games or investment under imperfect information. I later presented this thesis, adapted into a working paper entitled “Crowdfunding as a Social Movement: The Determinants of Success in Kickstarter Campaigns,” at the SEA and WEAI conferences in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

My primary interest in the economics of digitization is in how information is becoming cheaper to obtain, but also cheaper to provide. This can reduce bias, but also increase noise. This can affect both purely economic decisions, such as an investor choosing a stock portfolio, or social ones, such as whether or not to participate in a protest. Social media may increase the visibility of activists, but it can also amplify “cheap talk” in expressing intent to act.

My goal in attending this workshop is to gain an understanding of this new field of research, both in the topics that have been explored and in the tools necessary to perform empirical analysis. Thank you for your consideration.