

15th Trans Pacific Labor Seminars, 2025@Tokyo

【Aim and Purpose】

The Trans Pacific Labor Seminar (TPLS) was founded by Takao Kato and Peter Kuhn in 2007 to begin a much-needed process of international academic integration of labor economists in the Pacific Rim. Since then, the TPLS has been holding annual meetings in the United States, Japan and Australia. This year we are pleased to bring the TPLS meeting back to Tokyo.

The purpose of this year's conference is, especially, to provide a forum for “trans-positional assessment” (Sen, 1993) that is, scrutinizing each specialty from the outside broadly. Observations in our daily lives are unavoidably position-based, yet, as Amartya Sen points out, “scientific reasoning need not be based on one specific position only.” We would like to reexamine the questions and answers that researchers have formulated in their splendid papers from various distances and diverse positions.

このたび「15th Trans Pacific Labor Seminars, 2025@Tokyo」を帝京大学霞が関キャンパスで開催いたします。このセミナーは、2007年の創立以来、環太平洋地域の労働経済学者の国際的な対話の場として、またシニアと若手研究者の対話を促進する場として機能しています。本年度の目的は、特に、各専門分野を広く外から精査する「位置越境的評価」(Sen, 1993)の場を提供することである。アマルティア・センが指摘するように、「科学的な推論はある特定の立場のみに基づく必要はない」。本セミナーでは、研究者たちが優れた論文にまとめた問いと答えを、さまざまな距離と多様な立場から見つめ直したいと思います。広くご参加いただけると幸いです。

【Program Committee】

Takao Kato (Colgate University), Peter Kuhn (University of California Santa Barbara), Ryo Kambayashi (Musashi University), Mari Tanaka (Hitotsubashi University/University of Tokyo), and Atsushi Yamagishi (Hitotsubashi University)

【Co-organizer】

-JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, “Establishing the International Society of Dignity Studies: Capability Damage and Human Dignity: Ethics and Philosophy of Welfare Economic Policy” (23H04855, PI: Reiko Gotoh)

-JST Moonshot Target 9, “Maximizing Well-Being and Agency on The Basis of Interpersonal Comparison of Brain Indicators: Specifying and Updating of Well-Being and Agency in Society” (JPMJMS2294, PI: Reiko Gotoh)

-Kambayashi Scholarship Foundation

【Host University】 Teikyo University, Advanced Comprehensive Research Organization

【Venue】 Teikyo University, Kasumigaseki Campus (9th floor, Hirakawacho Mori Tower
Hirakawacho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo)

PROGRAM DAY 1

Dates: May 29 (Thursday), 2025

Place: Tokyo, Japan

9:00 Opening remarks

Session 1: Inequality, Labor Movement, and Technology

Chair:

9:05-9:45 Nina Roussille, MIT: How Does Wage Inequality Affect the Labor Movement? With Barbara Biasi, Zoë Cullen and Julia Gilman

This paper provides the first empirical test of the causal impact of inequality on the labor movement, using three complementary research designs. First, we survey nearly 200 U.S. union organizers, presenting incentivized hypothetical choices about how to allocate campaign resources across workplaces with varying degrees of wage dispersion. Second, we experimentally increase the salience of wage inequality by disclosing a pay report to members of the Writers Guild of America during an active strike. Third, we exploit a natural experiment in Wisconsin—a pay reform that increased wage inequality among public school teachers. Linking administrative wage data to individual union dues payments, we identify which workers respond by withdrawing support. Across all three studies, we find that rising pay inequality significantly undermines collective action. This effect is concentrated among workers who stand to benefit most from individual bargaining in unequal environments. Moreover, our organizer survey reveals that inequality also shapes union strategy: in more unequal settings, organizers tend to target smaller bargaining units and campaign on non-wage amenities, aiming to reduce internal conflict over wage demands. Together, our results highlight the potential for “inequality traps” whereby collective action, viewed as the counteracting force against inequality, becomes harder as wage gaps widen.

9:45-10:25 Takahiro Toriyabe, Hitotsubashi University: Linking Lifecycle and Cross-sectional Inequality: Cohort Dynamics and the Role of Technological Change. With Christian Dustmann and Eric Klemm

This paper examines the determinants of cross-sectional and lifecycle inequality using a lifecycle earnings process model that incorporates earnings mobility and non-employment risks across birth cohorts and over time. Unobserved skill prices and the variance of individual fixed effects across cohorts are the primary drivers, with unemployment risk being a key determinant of life cycle inequality. To explain the increase in the variance of fixed effects, we interpret these within a Roy model as realized productivity influenced by both ability and task choice. We provide evidence that technological change can amplify inequality by widening the variation in individual productivity, in addition to the standard mechanism that operates through price changes.

10:25-10:55 Coffee Break

Session 2: Childcare and Gender

Chair:

10:55-11:35 Mari TANAKA, University of Tokyo and Hitotsubashi University: The Effects of Workplace Interventions on Men's Childcare Participation: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial. With Hiroko Okudaira, Mariko Sakka, and Shintaro Yamaguchi.

This study examines the effectiveness of workplace interventions in promoting men's participation in childcare. Collaborating with firms, we conduct a randomized controlled trial to evaluate two interventions: a work-life balance training program and an information provision initiative. Our findings demonstrate that these interventions can influence both attitudes and behaviors. Male participants of the training reported increased time spent on childcare, and their spouses' work hours increased. Both training and information intervention successfully corrected misperceptions about colleagues' attitudes towards paternity leave. Although intent to take paternity leave did not significantly change, overall attitudes improved. These results provide valuable insights for policymakers and organizations seeking to address gender gaps in caregiving responsibilities and promote work-life balance.

11:35-12:15 Dmitri Koustas, University of Chicago: Childcare in the Era of Remote Work. With Yana Gallen, Stephanie Karol and Ithai Lurie.

While the labor force participation of mothers of young children has never been higher, use of paid childcare has fallen below pre-pandemic levels in the United States. We provide new links between administrative tax data on paid childcare and maternal labor supply to investigate the cause of these seemingly incongruous trends. The key hypothesis we probe is the role of increased workplace flexibility. In particular, we examine whether the decline in paid childcare is driven by mothers in more flexible occupations and at firms with more generous remote-work policies. We also examine the role of increased grandparental caregiving driven by Covid-era early retirements and changes in the quality and price of non-relative childcare, and how grandparental availability interacts with the workplace flexibility of mothers. By matching firm remote-work policies with tax records, and leveraging differences in the timing of flexible arrangements among otherwise similar firms, we analyze the impact of increased workplace flexibility on childcare demand and wage growth for mothers. We find that most of the overall decline in paid childcare in 2022 and 2023 can be attributed to teleworkable jobs by mothers and fathers. Our panel dataset, encompassing the universe of U.S. taxpayers, provides an unprecedented first look at how the remote work revolution is shaping the gender wage gap.

12:15-13:15 Lunch

Session 3: Gender Integration in Organizations

Chair:

13:15-13:55 Melanie Wasserman, UCLA: The Effects of Gender Integration on Men: Evidence from the U.S. Military

Do men negatively respond when women first enter an occupation? We answer this question by

studying the end of one of the final explicit occupational barriers to women in the U.S.: in 2016, the U.S. military opened all positions to women, including historically male-only combat occupations. We exploit the staggered integration of women into combat units to estimate the causal effects of the introduction of female colleagues on men's job performance, behavior, and perceptions of workplace quality, using monthly administrative personnel records and rich survey responses. We find that integrating women into previously all-male units does not negatively affect men's performance or behavioral outcomes, including retention, promotions, demotions, separations for misconduct, criminal charges, and medical conditions. Most of our results are precise enough to rule out small, detrimental effects. However, there is a wedge between men's perceptions and performance. The integration of women causes a negative shift in male soldiers' perceptions of workplace quality, with the effects driven by units integrated with a woman in a position of authority. We discuss how these findings shed light on the roots of occupational segregation by gender.

13:55-14:35 Chihiro Inoue, Kobe University: Does the Gender Ratio at Colleges Affect High School Students' College Choices? Joint with Asumi Saito and Yuki Takahashi.

Despite the negligible gender gap in mathematics and sciences in OECD countries, female students remain less likely to major in STEM in college. One potential explanation is that these fields are male-dominated, making female students a minority. We investigate whether the gender ratio at colleges affects high school students' college choices. Using an incentivized discrete choice experiment, we show that both female and male students prefer gender-balanced college programs over male- or female-majority ones. The primary reason students avoid being a minority is concern about the difficulty of adapting to such environments. We find no evidence of preference heterogeneity based on academic performance, socioeconomic background, or between STEM and non-STEM programs. These findings suggest that promoting gender balance in colleges can lead to a more efficient allocation of talent.

14:35-15:05 Coffee Break

Session 4 Gender norms

Chair:

15:05-15:45 Virginia Minni, University of Chicago: Managers and the cultural transmission of gender norms

This paper examines the influence of managers from countries with different gender norms on workplace culture and gender disparities within organizations. Using data from a multinational firm operating in over 100 countries, we exploit cross-country manager rotations that are orthogonal to workers to estimate the impact of male managers' gender norms on the work outcomes of male and female workers within the same team. We find that managers from countries with 1 s.d. more progressive gender attitudes narrow the gender pay gap by 5 percentage points (18%), primarily by promoting women at higher rates. The effects last beyond the manager's rotation and are concentrated in countries with more conservative gender attitudes. Moreover, workers in the destination office change their own attitudes, as evidenced by those workers in turn being more gender-equal with their subordinates. Our evidence points to individual managers as critical in shaping corporate culture.

15:45-16:25 Saisawat Samutpradit, Osaka University: Me After You: Household Responses to Spousal Death in a Developing Economy

This study examines the impact of death on surviving household members in settings where such events often constitute significant economic shocks. In developing economies, weak pension systems lead individuals to work into old age, and limited social security provides little support for families following the loss of a household member. Using long-term panel data from Thailand and a staggered difference-in-differences approach that exploits variation in the timing of death among the elderly, we analyze how survivors adjust to spousal loss. Following a spouse's death, widow households experienced a decline in public transfers, whereas widower households saw little change, a disparity attributed to gender imbalances in the pension system. Widows often took over household businesses with support from children and relatives, while widowers tended to reduce their labor supply. Coresidency with children, particularly daughters, increased, and widow households temporarily benefited from higher gift income. Overall, our findings suggest that survivors rely more on informal support networks than on formal insurance mechanisms."

18:00 Conference Dinner at Garb-central (Tokyo Garden Terrace Kioicho)

PROGRAM DAY 2

Dates: May 30 (Friday), 2025

Place:

Session 5 Policy Interventions in the Labor Market I

Chair:

9:00-9:40 Nguyen Thanh TUNG, Hitotsubashi University: Minimum Wage, Firm Revenue, and the Role of Product Switching

This paper utilizes a comprehensive data set at the firm- and firm-product levels to examine the minimum wage effects on firm revenue and its components, and the role of product switching. By decomposing firm sales revenue by type of products, this paper finds that continuing products contribute a large share to the sales revenue growth. However, the sales revenue of continuing products is negatively affected by the minimum wage while newly added products help offset this adverse effect. Empirical findings suggest that both manufacturing and non-manufacturing firms in Vietnam could not rely on output price adjustments to respond to the minimum wage shock. Importantly, through product switching, especially adding new products, manufacturing firms can protect their sales revenue from the shock and mitigate the negative employment effect.

9:40-10:20 Simon Quach, University of Southern California: The Impact of Pay Transparency in Job Postings on the Labor Market

A number of states in the US have recently passed policies that require employers to provide salary information in job postings. Although these policies aim to increase workers' wages, there are

ambiguous theoretical predictions and limited empirical research on their impacts. This paper studies the labor market effects of these laws using a combination of data from Lightcast, Glassdoor, and the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Leveraging a difference-in-difference design, we find that employers increased the fraction of postings with salary information by 30 percentage points, although there remains substantial noncompliance. Across all three datasets, we find consistent evidence of an increase in wages of around 1.3-3.6%. At the same time, we find no impacts on pay dispersion, employment, the number of job postings, or skill and education requirements. Overall, we find evidence that pay transparency in postings increased competition in the labor market, leading to positive impacts on wages even for incumbent workers and firms that were always posting wages, neither of which were directly targeted by the policy.

10:20-10:50 Coffee Break

Session 6 Policy Interventions in the Labor Market II

Chair:

10:50-11:30 Katsuhiko Komatsu, Kyoto University: The Welfare Impact of Reemployment Bonuses

This paper investigates the welfare impact of reemployment bonuses in a dynamic job search model. Reemployment bonuses, monetary incentives offered to workers who quickly get reemployed, may mitigate the moral hazard in unemployment insurance (UI) while preserving consumption smoothing. I first derive a sufficient statistic formula for the welfare impact of reemployment bonuses given the current level of UI benefits. The formula clarifies the channels through which reemployment bonuses affect welfare and can be evaluated without requiring a full specification of all model primitives. Evaluating the formula using U.S. data, I find a large positive welfare impact of reemployment bonuses. Furthermore, I also fully calibrate the model and find that incorporating reemployment bonuses into the UI system allows the government to optimally provide more generous UI benefits than the case without reemployment bonuses.

11:30-12:10 Gaurav Khanna, UC San Diego: The IT Boom and Other Unintended Consequences of Chasing the American Dream (Gaurav Khanna and Nicolas Morales)

We study how US immigration policy and the Internet boom affected not just the US, but also led to a tech boom in India. Students and workers in India acquired computer science skills to join the rapidly growing US IT industry. As the number of US visas was capped, many remained in India, enabling the growth of an Indian IT sector that eventually surpassed the US in IT exports. We leverage variation in immigration quotas and US demand for migrants to show that India experienced a 'brain gain' when the probability of migrating to the US was higher. Using detailed data on higher education, alumni networks, and work histories of high-skill workers, we show that changes in the US H-1B cap induced changes in fields of study, and occupation choice in India. We then build and estimate a quantitative model incorporating migration, heterogeneous abilities, trade, innovation, and dynamic occupation choice in both countries. We find that high-skill migration raised the average welfare of workers in each country, but had distributional consequences. The H-1B program induced Indians to switch to computer science occupations, and helped drive the shift in IT production from the US to India. We show that accounting for endogenous skill acquisition is key for quantifying the gains from migration.

12:10-13:15 Lunch

Session 7 Heterogeneity in Schools and Work

Chair:

13:15-13:55 Mika AKESAKA, Kobe University: Hotter Days, Wider Gap: The Distributional Impact of Heat on Student Achievement.

We demonstrate that heat disproportionately impairs human capital accumulation among low-performing students compared with their high-performing peers, using nationwide examinations data from 22 million students in Japan. Given the strong correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic background, this suggests that heat exposure exacerbates pre-existing socioeconomic disparities among children. However, access to air conditioning in schools significantly mitigates these adverse effects across all achievement levels, with particularly pronounced benefits for lower-performing students. These findings suggest that public investment in school infrastructure can help reduce the unevenly distributed damage caused by heat to student learning, thereby promoting both efficiency and equity.

13:55-14:35 Miguel Zerecero, UC Irvine: No More Limited Mobility Bias: Exploring the Heterogeneity of Labor Markets

We propose a bootstrap method to correct limited mobility bias in the variance components of AKM models. Our method handles multiple corrections without increasing computational cost and works with any symmetric estimator of the error covariance matrix, including the one from Kline, Saggio, and Sølvesten (2020). Monte Carlo simulations show our method corrects the bias and is faster than alternative methods. Using French administrative data, we apply our method in four ways: (i) a full-sample variance decomposition of log wages under different assumptions on the error structure, (ii) correcting thousands of labor markets to study the relationship between market size and worker-firm or worker-coworker sorting, (iii) analyzing gender differences and (iv) life cycle patterns in wage components. In all cases, the corrections are important to interpret the results.

Closing remarks