

COLE RANDALL WILLIAMS

<http://colerandallwilliams.com>

colerw@uci.edu

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

Placement Director: John Duffy

DUFFY@UCI.EDU (949) 824-8341

Office Contact Information

3151 Social Science Plaza A

Irvine, CA 92697-5100

Cell: (949) 307-6366

Graduate Studies:

University of California, Irvine, 2013 - Present

Ph.D. Candidate in Economics

Thesis Title: Essays on Rational Learning and Disagreement

Expected Completion Date: June 2018

Undergraduate Studies:

B.A, Economics, University of California, Riverside, magna cum laude, 2013

References:

Professor Jean-Paul Carvalho

SSPA 3189, UCI

(949) 824-3417, jpcarv@uci.edu

Professor Stergios Skaperdas

SSPA 3123, UCI

(949) 824-4167, sskaperd@uci.edu

Professor John Duffy

SSPB 3285, UCI

(949) 824-8341, duffy@uci.edu

Teaching and Research Fields:

Game & Decision Theory, Information Economics, Experimental Economics

Invited Presentations:

Caltech: Linde Institute/SISL Seminar • Pasadena 2017

IMBS: Conference on the Formation of Beliefs • Irvine 2017

IRES: Graduate Workshop • Orange 2017

IMBS: Graduate Workshop • Irvine 2015

Awards & Fellowships:

Kassouf Fellowship for excellence in coursework and research • 2016-17

Economics Merit Fellowship • 2018

UCI Summer Research Fellowships • 2016-17

Phi Beta Kappa • 2013

Service:

Theory, History, & Political Economy Workshop • Organizer 2016

Research Papers:

“Echo Chambers: Disagreement and Polarization in Bayesian Learning” (Job Market Paper)

Abstract: Social learning and rational disagreement have been studied in environments in which agents are either homogeneous or the distribution of types is known. We study social learning under *unobserved heterogeneity*, where the distribution of types is unknown and is itself the subject of learning. This *dual learning* process unlocks a number of new results. Rational agents display confirmation bias. Learning is local: individuals place greater weight on opinions closer to their own and rationally discount more divergent views. Not only is there asymptotic disagreement, but social learning can polarize beliefs. Dual learning also provides a basis for social identification and group formation. We explore applications to political opinion formation, extremist behavior, and choice of news media.

“Truth and Conformity on Networks” with Aydin Mohseni

Abstract: Often, public discussions of questions of great social import exhibit two important properties: (1) they admit only equivocal answers, (2) and they are influenced by conformity bias. We study how social networks can influence the flow and reliability of information in matters of public opinion. In our model, heterogeneous agents express public opinions where those expressions are driven by the competing priorities of accuracy and of conformity to one’s peers. Agents learn, via Bayesian conditionalization, from private signal from nature, and the public declarations of other agents. We show that, in the presence of equivocal evidence and a modicum of conformity bias, communities of rational agents can fail to learn the truth, even in the long run.

“Playing a Role: A Club Goods Model of Normative Behavior”

Abstract: In this paper, I argue that people value playing a role in achieving outcomes they deem to have normative value. The achievement of a positive outcome (electing one’s preferred candidate in an election, helping those in need, etc.) operates as a club good, being consumed in accordance to the degree that one “plays a role” in its achievement. Applications suggest that large and small donors respond differently to government contributions to charity, one’s individual propensity to vote is non-monotonic in the proportion of the population supporting the same candidate as oneself, and successful social movements experience a sudden burst in participation that is followed by a period of gradual decline.

Teaching Experience:

(Graduate) *Decision & Auction Theory* • Teaching Assistant (Spring 2016, Spring 2017)

(Graduate) *Game Theory* • Teaching Assistant (Winter 2016, Winter 2017)

(Graduate) *Microeconomic Theory* • Teaching Assistant (Fall 2015, Fall 2016)

(Undergrad) *Intermediate Microeconomics* • Teaching Assistant (Fall 2014, Winter 2015)

(Undergrad) *Applied Econometrics* • Teaching Assistant (Summer 2014)

(Undergrad) *Principles of Microeconomics* • Teaching Assistant (Fall 2013, Winter 2014, Spring 2015, Summer 2017)