



Friday, February 11, 2022

2:30 to 4:00 PM

Location:

Zoom

<https://unm.zoom.us/j/91264203890>

Yang Zhou is an assistant professor of Economics at the University of North Texas.

Ideologies Matter: Political Ideology, Race, and Health Disparities

How does the ideology of elected officials influence public health? In this paper, we construct a novel measure of political ideology on the MSA level in the United States, building on Shor and McCarty's (2011) state legislature ideology mapping. Using the political ideology index constructed and the SMART BRFSS data from 2010-2018, we investigate the relationship between ideology and public health in American cities. Employing OLS models with fixed effects and conducting robustness tests with propensity score matching (PSM) method, we find that residents in a MSA with more conservative political ideology tend to have worse general health outcomes. The effect of political ideology becomes statistically insignificant if within an MSA, which might be due to the limited ideological change within the short observation period. Meanwhile, white people tend to have better general health outcomes, though being in a MSA with a conservative ideology still worsens that for them. Furthermore, we also find that physical health and mental health are affected differently than the general health. Last but not least, the ideology score constructed from the lower chamber is found to have more statistically significant results than that from the upper chamber, and we argue that the lower chamber one, i.e., the more decentralized one, is a more accurate measure of ideology for the local level and serves the purpose of research questions in this paper better.