The Division of Economics and the Economic Growth Centre cordially invite you to a seminar by Dr Jie Zheng

Speaker : Dr Jamie Lien
Assistant Professor
Tsinghua University, Economics at the School of Economics and Management

Topic : "Brain Food Isn't Health Food (in the Field): Limited SelfControl"

Chairperson : Assistant Professor Hong Fuhai
Division of Economics
School of Humanities & Social Sciences
Nanyang Technological University

Date : Wednesday, 12 November 2014
Time : 2:30 pm – 3:50 pm
Venue : HSS Meeting Room 5 (HSS 04-89)
Nanyang Technological University
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
14, Nanyang Drive
Singapore 637332

About the Speaker:

Jamie Lien is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University. She received her Ph.D. in Economics from University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in 2010. She also received an M.A. in Economics from UCSD (2005), and a B.A. degree in Economics and Mathematics in 2001 from Wellesley College. Her main research areas are Behavioral Economics and Applied Microeconomics, with a particular interest in testing behavioral economics theories in the field. Her research papers have been published or accepted by journals including American Economic Review (Papers and Proceedings), Games and Economic Behavior, Experimental Economics, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Economic Inquiry, and Chinese Economy.

Abstract:

Capacities for self-control have consequences for the effectiveness of policies designed to assist individuals in making choices affecting their long run well-being. The strength model from the psychology literature proposes that self-control is a constrained resource whose effectiveness tends to dwindle when an individual attempts to resist multiple sources of temptation at a time. We develop a simple economic framework for the strength model, and test its consequences in the field among individuals who will soon enter the labor market. Specifically, we analyze the food purchase patterns of university students who face timevarying academic self-control demands. Relative purchase of unhealthy fast foods increases during the week of final exams when students' workloads are most intense, compared to the purchase ratio of such foods during other times of the year. To address the external validity of the field data, and assist in ruling out alternative explanations, we conduct a field survey which includes a snack choice experiment. In the experiment, the main robust and significant predictor of choosing an unhealthy snack over a healthy snack is subjects' self-reported time needed to complete their academic responsibilities during the upcoming week. These findings are consistent with an economic model of limited self-control in which individuals must choose how to allocate their self-control between academic activities and eating activities. Potential implications for workloads and healthy eating are discussed.

Reservation:

Admission is free. Please reply to Director-EGC, e-mail:d-egc@ntu.edu.sg to confirm your attendance.