

# Mehdi Shakiba

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## Summary

Economics Ph.D. candidate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with 5+ years of experience working with large datasets, both in academia and across different industries, specializing in applied microeconomics. Multidisciplinary educational background, familiar with different programming languages/software, and knowledgeable on consulting, economic modeling, and various econometrics approaches. Adept at researching with proven leadership and communication skills.

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## Education

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**Ph.D. — Economics**

*Expected May 2019*

**M.Sc. — Economics**

*Graduated Dec 2015*

Sharif University of Technology

**B.Sc. — Electrical Engineering**

*Graduated Jun 2013*

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## Primary Fields

Applied Microeconomics • Game Theory • Political Economics

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## Academic Research

Job Market Paper: **Do Senators Take Strategic Advantage of their Last Names?** [[Abstract](#)] [[Full text in PDF](#)]

Working Paper: **Does the Electorate Punish Lazy Senators?**

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## Industry Experience

JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Columbus, OH

**Treasury Financial Modeling Intern**

*May 2018 – Aug 2018*

- Developed a model assessing the risk of bank robberies at Chase branches, as well as predicting loss in the event of a robbery
- Helped predict competitor pricing for auto loans using market rates

PNC Bank

Pittsburgh, PA

**Decision Analytics and Research Intern**

*May 2017 – Aug 2017*

- Created a tool for evaluating marketing programs by optimizing response curves using data from marketing campaigns
- Helped forecast the cost associated with a promotional offer for new checking accounts opened
- Used machine learning algorithms to predict the likelihood of consumers applying for credit cards

Bud Lab — [Anheuser-Busch InBev](#)

Urbana-Champaign, IL

**Data Science Intern**

*May 2016 – Aug 2016*

- Impact Analysis: Assessed the marginal increase in Bud Light sales due to partnership with the NFL
- Product Mix Management: Helped identify the products with high marginal contributions and optimize the mix
- Auction Optimization: Helped analyze effectiveness of the company's procurement auctions

[Illinois Business Consulting](#)

Urbana-Champaign, IL

**Consultant**

*Aug 2016 – Nov 2016*

- Helped strategize brand awareness improvement for a consumer goods company

## Teaching Experience

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**Instructor for Economic Growth & Development**

*Aug 2018 – Present*

**Instructor for Game Theory**

*Aug 2016 – May 2018*

**Teaching Assistant for Intermediate Microeconomics**

*Aug 2014 – May 2016*

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## Honors

- Honored in the “List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students” — University of Illinois
    - Fall 2017, and Spring 2018 semesters, as the Instructor for Game Theory
    - Fall 2014, Fall 2015, and Spring 2016 semesters, as a TA for Intermediate Microeconomics
  - Fellowship — Department of Economics, University of Illinois, 2013
  - Ranked 189<sup>th</sup> among more than 300,000 — Iran’s nationwide undergraduate entrance exam, 2008
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## References

### **Stefan Krasa (Chair)**

Professor of Economics  
Director of Graduate Studies  
University of Illinois  
(217) 333-7698  
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### **Daniel Bernhardt**

Professor of Economics  
IBE Distinguished Professor  
University of Illinois  
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### **George Deltas**

Professor of Economics  
Associate Head of the Department  
University of Illinois  
(217) 333-4678  
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## Research Papers

### Job Market Paper

#### **Do Senators Take Strategic Advantage of their Last Names? [\[Full text in PDF\]](#)**

*Abstract:* In this paper I develop a sequential voting model to study roll-calls in the United States Senate, and empirically test its implications. In this procedure, senators cast their votes in a sequence, exogenously determined by the alphabetical order of their last names. I categorize senators into multiple types whose utilities depend not only on the roll-call outcome, but also on the vote they personally cast. When, among certain types, preferences over the senator’s personal vote and the roll-call outcome are not aligned, abstention emerges as a nontrivial choice. For example, on a specific Republican-sponsored bill, a Republican senator representing a moderate constituency may want the legislation to pass, but not to be pinned down by a vote for it. As a result, the senator may want to vote for the legislation if that vote is necessary for the legislation to pass, but to abstain or vote against if the vote is unnecessary for victory, or if the outcome is a lost cause. I prove that, in the sequential voting context, the opportunity to make such strategic decisions is not uniformly available to senators with different alphabetical ranks, which determines their positions in the voting queue. More specifically, the model predicts lower levels of abstention for those in the middle, implying a U-shaped relationship between rank and likelihood of abstention. Using the history of all Senate roll-calls between 1867 and 2015, I find a significant U-shaped quadratic relationship between rank and likelihood of abstention, providing empirical evidence that senators do indeed take strategic advantage of their last names.

### Working Paper

#### **Does the Electorate Punish Lazy Senators?**

*Abstract:* In this paper I assess the impact of absenteeism in the U.S. Senate on senators’ re-election chances. I find that more politically polarized constituencies tend to care less about their senators’ “laziness.” I analyze 1,255 senatorial re-election campaigns (from 1914 through 2014) and show that senators representing states with greater polarization are less likely to be punished for skipping their voting responsibilities in the Senate, compared to their colleagues representing more moderate states.