Econ Brown Bag Research Seminar
Mining Narratives from Large Text Corpora: Joint work with Elliott Ash (ETH Zurich) and Germain Gauthier (CREST, Polytechnique)

You are cordially invited to the following seminar: Wednesday, 3 March 2021 from 12:15hrs – 13:15hrs, ONLINE via ZOOM

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Philine Widmer is a Ph.D. student at the University of St. Gallen (supervised by Roland Hodler). Her research covers topics in political, media, and development economics. She is particularly interested in bringing natural language processing techniques to applied economics research.

ABSTRACT: When making sense of the world and of politics, human beings often rely on narratives: simple, relatable, plausible stories about how things work. This paper shows how to identify and quantify latent narrative structures by extracting semantic roles (agent-action-patient tuples) and reducing their dimensionality using text embeddings. We demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach by exploring narratives in speeches from the U.S. Congress, 1858-2015. Overall, our narrative features are more interpretable and nuanced than other standard text analysis methods (i.e. n-gram counts and topic models). When aggregated at the speaker or party level, narratives form a complex directed multigraph, which offers a novel representation of the worldview expressed by a speaker or a party.

This seminar will take place online. For ZOOM meeting details please email heather.dupontderivaltz@unisg.ch