

# RUBEN DURANTE

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PERSONAL INFORMATION Date of birth: April 27, 1978  
Citizenship: Italy (citizen), U.S. (permanent resident)

EDUCATION Ph.D. Economics, Brown University, 2004 to present  
Expected completion: May 2010  
Dissertation: "Essays in Political Economy"  
M.A. Economics, Brown University, 2005  
M.A. Political Economy, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne (with distinction), 2002  
B.A. Economics, Università degli Studi di Messina (summa cum laude), 2001

REFERENCES Professor Oded Galor Department of Economics  
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[Oded\\_Galor@Brown.edu](mailto:Oded_Galor@Brown.edu)  
Professor Brian Knight Department of Economics  
Brown University  
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Professor Louis Putterman Department of Economics  
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FIELDS OF INTEREST Primary: Political Economy, Economic Growth & Development  
Secondary: Public Economics, Experimental Economics

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE Research assistant to Professor Brian Knight, Brown University (January-December 2007)  
Research assistant to Professor Ross Levine, Brown University (Summer 2006)  
Research assistant to Professor Louis Putterman, Brown University (Summer 2005)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE *Public Economics*, teaching assistant to Prof. Brian Knight, Spring 2009, Brown University  
*International Trade*, teaching assistant to Prof. Oded Galor, Spring 2008, Brown University  
*Theory of Economic Growth*, teaching assistant to Prof. Oded Galor, Fall 2006, Brown University  
*Microeconomics*, teaching assistant to Prof. Patricia Charléty, Fall 2003, ESSEC Business School  
*Contract Theory*, teaching assistant to Prof. Laura Valderrama, Spring 2003, ESSEC Business School

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE The World Bank (WBIPR)  
Consultant (September 2006 to August 2007); Intern (Summer 2006)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS Midwest Economic Association 2010 Annual Meeting (forthcoming); CEPR Conference on "Economics of Culture, Institutions, and Crime" (Milan, 2010); 2010 ASSA Conference (Atlanta, 2010); NEUDC Conference (Boston, 2009); Workshop on "Political Economy and the Environment" (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2009); 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference on Early Economic Developments (Vancouver, 2009); LACEA Political Economy Group Meeting (Cartagena, 2009); 6<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Media Economics (Zurich, 2008); 2<sup>nd</sup> La Pietra-Mondragone Workshop (Florence, 2008); 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Society for the Study of Economic Inequality (Berlin, 2007).

SEMINAR            Université Catholique de Louvain (scheduled); Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (2010); Universidad PRESENTATIONS de Alicante (2010); IMT Lucca (2010); University of Colorado Boulder (2010); Université du Québec Montréal (2010); University of Essex (2010); Sciences Po (2010); Bocconi University (2010); Stockholm School of Economics (2010); Inter-American Development Bank, Research Department (2010); University of Bologna (2009); IMT Lucca (2009); Brown University Macroeconomics Workshop (2009); University of Copenhagen (2009); University of Padua (2007); University of Trento (2007).

REFEREE            Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Economic Growth, Journal of Economic Inequality

HONORS            *Department of Economics, Brown University* AND AWARDS Merit Dissertation Fellowship (2008); Summer Research Fellowship (2008); Abramson Award for best third-year research paper (2007); Doctoral Fellowship/Scholarship (2004-05, 2006-09)  
*Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University*  
Doctoral Fellowship (2005-06)  
*French Ministry of Education and Research*  
International Mobility Grant (2004); Graduate Fellowship (2001-02)  
*ESSEC Business School, Paris, France*  
Graduate Fellowship (2002-04)

AFFILIATIONS     Graduate Program in Development, Brown University (2005 to present)  
Spatial Structures in Social Sciences (S4), Brown University (2006 to present)  
Center for Latin American and the Caribbean Studies, Brown University (2006 to present)

JOB MARKET     [RISK, COOPERATION AND THE ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF SOCIAL TRUST: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION](#) PAPER  
Abstract: Extensive research has documented the importance of social trust for economic development, yet the origins of trust remain largely unexplored. This paper examines the historical relationship between risk, cooperation and the emergence of social trust. I hypothesize that norms of trust developed in pre-industrial times as a result of experiences of collective action and mutual insurance triggered by the need for subsistence farmers to cope with climatic risk. These norms persisted over time, even after climate had become largely unimportant for economic activity. I test this hypothesis in the context of Europe combining high-resolution climate data for the period 1500-2000 with contemporary survey data at the sub-national level. I find that regions characterized by higher year-to-year variability in precipitation and temperature display higher levels of trust. Consistent with a theory of insurance through geographic differentiation, I also find that trust is higher in regions with more spatially heterogeneous precipitation. Furthermore, variation in social trust is driven by weather patterns during the growing season and by historical rather than recent variability. These results are robust to the inclusion of country fixed-effects, a variety of geographical controls, and regional measures of early political and economic development.

RESEARCH         [PARTISAN CONTROL, MEDIA BIAS, AND VIEWER RESPONSES: EVIDENCE FROM BERLUSCONI'S ITALY](#) PAPERS (with Brian Knight)  
NBER Working Paper #14273; conditionally accepted to the *Journal of the European Economic Association*  
Abstract: This paper examines whether and how viewers respond to changes in partisan bias in media news. We use data from Italy, where the main private television network is owned by Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of the center-right coalition, and the public television corporation is largely controlled by the ruling coalition. We first document that after the 2001 national elections, when the control of the government passed from the center-left to the center-right, news content on public television shifted to the right. Using individual survey data, we find robust evidence that viewers responded to these changes by modifying their choice of news programs. On the one hand right-leaning viewers increased their propensity to watch public channels which, even after the change, remained to the left of private channels. On the other hand, left-wing viewers reacted by switching from the main public channel to another public channel that was controlled by the left during both periods. We show that this behavioral response, which tended to shift

ideological exposure to the left, significantly, though only partially, offset the movement of public news content to the right.

PREFERENCES FOR REDISTRIBUTION AND PERCEPTION OF FAIRNESS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

(with Louis Putterman); revise-resubmit *Journal of the European Economic Association*

Abstract: This paper investigates the relative importance of fairness preferences, risk aversion, and self-interest in determining support for redistribution. We present evidence from a series of laboratory experiments in which subjects choose the level of redistributive taxation to be applied to an initial distribution of endowments. Our design permits us to investigate how support for redistribution varies based on: a) whether or not the decision-maker is part of the group affected by the tax; b) whether or not she has perfect information on her relative position in the distribution; c) whether or not the initial distribution is determined according to task performance; d) on the direct cost of redistribution to the decision-maker; e) on the deadweight loss associated with taxation. We find that: a) most subjects favor a more equal distribution among others; b) support for redistribution is sensitive to the cost of taxation and to the deadweight loss associated with it; c) risk aversion is associated with higher demand for redistribution when income is uncertain; d) subjects support less redistribution when the initial distribution is determined according to task performance. The last effect is much larger for males than for females and accounts for most of the gender-based difference in redistributive choices.

WORKING  
PAPERS

ACADEMIC DYNASTIES: FAMILISM AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE ITALIAN ACADEMIA

(with Giovanna Labartino, and Roberto Perotti)

Abstract: Extensive anecdotal evidence suggests that practices related to familism and nepotism are widespread in Italian universities. However, systematic evidence is not available since information on family relations is generally unavailable or confidential. We explore the relevance of family connections in the Italian academia using a novel dataset on Italian university professors with a particular focus on the informative content of professors' last names. We construct an index of academic 'homonymity' by comparing the relative frequency of a last name in each academic unit and in the population of the area where the university is located using data from the Italian fiscal census. Our index provides an intuitive measure of how disproportionately common a certain last name is within a specific academic unit relative to the overall underlying population. We use this index to investigate differences across academic units in the relevance of family connections. Our results are highly consistent with the anecdotal evidence and show significant differences across regions, universities, and disciplines. We find that familism, as measured by our index, is also negatively correlated with standard measures of social trust. With regard to the relationship between familism and academic productivity, we find that universities with higher levels of familism tend to be characterized by poorer academic performance, especially in terms of research achievement.

BOOK  
CHAPTERS

ATTITUDES TOWARD TAX PROGRESSIVITY, CORPORATE TAX, AND ESTATE TAX IN THE ANES 2006 PILOT STUDY RESPONSES (with Louis Putterman), in "The American National Election Studies Book of Ideas" edited by J. Aldrich and K. M. McGraw, forthcoming

RESEARCH IN  
PROGRESS

VESTED INTERESTS, MEDIA CAPTURE AND RESISTANCE TO TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION (with Omer Ozak)  
SOCIO-CULTURAL ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE VARIABILITY: EVIDENCE FROM AFRICA (with Emanuele Massetti)  
ON THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS OF THE SICILIAN MAFIA: THEORY AND EVIDENCE

SERVICE

Co-organizer of the Macroeconomics Lunch Seminar, Brown University Department of Economics (Fall 2007, Spring 2008)  
Graduate Students' Representative on the Brown University Internationalization Committee (2007)  
Member of the Committee of Residents of the *Maison des Étudiants Canadiens, Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris* (2003)

LANGUAGES

Italian (native), English (fluent), Spanish (fluent), French (fluent)