

HARVARD | BUSINESS | SCHOOL

F. CHRISTOPHER EAGLIN
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE – STRATEGY UNIT
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

March 26, 2021

Doctoral Workshop on Economics of Artificial Intelligence
National Bureau of Economic Research
1050 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138-5398

Dear Selection Committee,

I write to submit my application to the 2021 Doctoral Workshop on Economics of Artificial Intelligence. Please find attached a brief statement which outlines my research and what I hope to gain from the workshop and my CV with coursework.

I very much hope that I will be able to join this prestigious set of scholars to learn in depth about the intersection of economics and AI. My research interests, how technological solutions impact entrepreneurs and small and medium sized businesses, dovetail completely with this workshop. I would love the opportunity to read the assigned papers, be an active participant in the discussion sessions, and receive feedback on my research from the top scholars in the field.

Thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Best,

F. Christopher Eaglin

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Proposal

Over the past year the US has experienced extreme turmoil as a result of COVID, protests around racial injustice, and political turmoil. Some of these protests have become violent resulting in looting of many businesses and in rare cases death. The turmoil the US has faced is not unique but rather is characteristic of the operating environment for many entrepreneurs and small firms in particular in emerging markets. An underlying global question is how do SMEs and entrepreneurs respond to capital constraints, violence, and other large exogenous shocks and the uncertainty that they bring? What sorts of technological and innovative solutions might assist them as they navigate high degrees of uncertainty? This question is critically understudied with most work on firm behavior focused on larger enterprises who have sufficient economic and political resources to shape their environment or microenterprises focused only on subsistence. Furthermore, there is little research on the interaction of these topics and the technological solutions these firms employ to help manage their work processes and strategic decisions.

I propose exploring the intersection of these questions in the context of a data rich environment partnering with a finance company in South Africa which supports the minibus taxi industry, which is characterized by thousands of small private actors who provide a public good (transportation) but do so without significant state support and often under threat of severe disruption from violence, demand shocks, collective action, and poor regulation. Combining detailed GPS route data and credit performance for over 10,000 firms, surveys on neighborhood level economic, social, and political factors, and detailed information on incidence of violence, I propose using this rich setting and dataset to investigate the questions prompted from the discussion above. I am currently partnering with this company to analyze the algorithms they currently use to assist their owners and devise careful experiments to change those algorithms in ways that might help improve their decisions and performance.

FULTON CHRISTOPHER EAGLIN

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EDUCATION

Harvard Business School — Boston, MA
PhD, Strategy — May 2022 (expected)
Committee: Tarun Khanna (chair), Rebecca Henderson, Michael Luca, Frank Nagle

University of Oxford — Oxford, UK
MPhil in International Development and Development Economics — June 2006
Marshall Scholarship, Thesis: Liberation Theology and Economic Development in Brazil

Morehouse College — Atlanta, GA
BA in Economics and Mathematics — May 2003
Valedictorian, Phi Beta Kappa

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Research: Understanding the limitation and accelerants of growth of entrepreneurs and SMEs in developed and emerging markets using theoretical tools, field experiments, and empirical analyses leveraging economic and organizational methods, spatial analysis machine learning

Teaching: Strategy, Economics for Managers, Reimagining Capitalism, Field Experiments, Strategy in Flawed Markets

PUBLICATIONS

"Corporate Engagement in the Political Process and Democratic Ideals" (forthcoming) *Political Economy and Justice* ed. Danielle Allen, Yochai Benkler, and Rebecca Henderson. University of Chicago Press. 2021.

Reviewing literature on corporate governance and deliberative democracy, this paper argues that existing theories for corporate engagement in public processes insufficiently account for corporate capture and offers potential remedies.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Into the Unknown: Navigating Uncertainty and Informality with Entrepreneurs in South Africa
(Advised by Tarun Khanna and Rebecca Henderson; Ongoing)

This project explores how small firms and entrepreneurs in South Africa conduct search in highly uncertain environments. Using a unique and proprietary data set from credit providers and municipal surveys, I argue that search behavior for SMEs might differ from standard models suggesting new pathways for SME superior performance.

Hidden Gazelles: Uncovering strategy traits and behavior amongst entrepreneurs in Ethiopia
(Co-authored with Simon Quinn, Marcel Fafchamps, Michael Kolle and Girum Abebe: Survey in Progress)

Through qualitative research and field surveys, we aim to understand how prospective entrepreneurs consider strategic decisions and whether their stated preferences and values determine their strategic outlook. We build on existing survey data from previous work with Ethiopian entrepreneurs and apply ML methods to uncover these attributes.

Social Compliance amidst Uncertainty: The impact of labor dynamics on the adoption of the minimum wage in the UK
(Co-authored with Michael Luca and Gregor Schubert; Data Acquired and Experiment in Development)
Analyzing proprietary data on over 1 million small and medium sized businesses in the UK, this project seeks to understand how labor market competition and uncertainty determines the adoption and impact of the minimum wage on firm productivity. We are conducting a large field experiment to determine the nature of these effects.

RESEARCH AWARDS AND HONORS

Strategic Management Society 2020 Dissertation Research Fellowship	2020
Harvard Business School, Dissertation Completion Fellowship	2020
Harvard Center for Geographic Analysis GIS Institute Fellow	2021

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

CORe Teaching Fellow, Harvard Business School Online: Course – Economics for Managers	2020
Teaching Fellow, Harvard Business School: Course - Reimagining Capitalism (Rebecca Henderson)	2019
Adjunct Professor, Nyack College: Courses – Global Leadership, Innovation, and Strategic Planning	2015
Undergraduate tutor, Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford: Course – Economic Development and History	2005

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Bishop Rock Capital New York, NY

Research Analyst 2015 – 2016

Investment professional at US$250 million hedge fund focused on long/short strategies in equities across sectors. Implemented and improved processes for sourcing investment ideas and created reporting structures.

Even Ground New York, NY

Executive Director & Consultant 2014 – 2020

Selected as inaugural executive director of NY-based 501(c)3 which partners with small African NGOs to provide fundraising, strategic planning, administrative management aiding their mission to break of HIV/AIDS in their communities. Increased general fund contributions by 200% in initial years.

Pegasys Strategy & Development Cape Town, SA and New York, NY

Principal and International Director 2009 – 2012

Leveraged experience, networks, and business development expertise to create new opportunities for infrastructure and natural resource development initiatives internationally as part of South African based management consulting firm. Managed multi-national team of experts for reports on water risk and climate change in South Africa.

AES Corporation Washington, DC, London, South Africa

Business Associate and Regional Manager, Southern Africa 2006 – 2009

AES Corporation is a Fortune 200 global power company (i.e. natural gas, coal, hydropower, wind, and renewables) that provides energy to customers in 27 countries and has annual revenue of over US$18 billion. Oversaw the renewable and conventional energy infrastructure project portfolio in Southern Africa of US$5 billion/2500MW and 10 person project teams across new deals spanning Africa in multiple technologies.

SELECTED DOCTORAL COURSEWORK

Experimental Methods in Behavioral Research (Michael Luca and John Beshears, HBS)
Advanced Quantitative Methodologies (Matthew Blackwell, Harvard Government)
Advanced Quantitative Research Methodology (Donald Rubin, Harvard Statistics)
Applied Econometrics (Cicala, Harvard Economics)
Contract Theory (Oliver Hart, Harvard Economics)
Theoretical and Empirical Entrepreneurship (William Kerr, HBS)
Analytical Methods for Strategy (Eric Van den Steen, HBS)
Advanced Strategy, Introduction to Strategy, International Business Theory (Tarun Khanna and Hong Luo, HBS)

REFERENCES

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