Cheryl Wu

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Cheryl Wu

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Contact Information

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Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Yale University — 2023–current
Fields: Growth, Trade.
B.S. in Mathematics, B.A. in Economics with Honors, University of Chicago — 2017–2021

Past Positions

Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Tokyo — 2024
Research Assistant for Dr. James Robinson and Dr. Leander Heldring — 2022–2023
Research Assistant for Dr. Jaya Wen — 2020–2023
Research Assistant for Dr. Chris Blattman — 2019–2021

Honors and Awards

Robert E. Evenson Fund — 2024
National Science Fundation Graduate Research Fellowships — 2023
Phi Beta Kappa Member — 2021
Summa Cum Laude — 2021
Student Marshall — 2020
Gary Becker Scholar Social Sciences Collegiate Divisional Honors — 2020

Working Papers

"The Party and the Firm" (December 2023)
joint with Joris Mueller and Jaya Wen
"Censorship and Collective Action: Evidence from China"
Available upon request

Works In Progress

"Adoption of Western Studies and Growth during the Meiji Restoration"
"Civil Wars and Strategic Subsidies"
joint with Yulu Tang, Jaya Wen

Technical Skills

Programming Languages: Python, R, Stata
Technical Software: ArcGIS

References

Dr. Costas Arkolakis
Yale University
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Dr. Jaya Wen
Harvard Business School
E-mail: jwen@hbs.edu

Dr. James Robinson
University of Chicago
E-mail: jamesrobinson@uchicago.edu

Languages

Wu (native), Mandarin (native), English (fluent), Japanese (fluent, JLPT 2nd level: 172/180), French (intermediate)

Citizenship

USA

Term:	Gen Econ Theory: Microeconomics (H)
Fall 2023	Gen Econ Theory: Macroeconomics (H)
	Econometrics I (H)
	Urban Japan Wkshp 1500–2000 (AUD)
Term:	Gen Econ Theory: Microeconomics (H)
Spring 2024	Gen Econ Theory: Macroeconomics (H)
	Econometrics II (H)
	Japanese Historical Documents (A)
Term:	Adv Macroeconomics I (HP)
Fall 2024	International Trade I (H)
	Economic Development I (HP)
	Topics in Empirical Economics & Public Policy (In Progress)
Term:	Adv Macroeconomics II (In Progress)
Spring 2025	International Trade II (In Progress)
	Comparative Economic Histories of Eurasia (In Progress)

My research investigates how societies adopt, implement, and further innovate upon transformative technologies during periods of rapid expansion of the productivity frontier. My current project examines Japan's remarkable technological leap during the Meiji period, focusing on how the introduction of Western scientific knowledge through domain schools catalyzed subsequent industrial innovation. This research addresses two fundamental challenges in understanding the relationship between knowledge diffusion and technological adoption and innovation: the scarcity of systematic education data during early industrialization periods, and the challenge of identifying causal mechanisms in knowledge transfer and technology adoption.

Using newly digitized historical records, I trace how Japanese domains transformed from traditional education systems that only taught Confucianism (political philosophy) to incorporating Western scientific knowledge. I construct novel datasets from historical documents that capture both knowledge transfer and technological outcomes, including detailed records of Western subjects taught at the school, the emergence of Western Studies networks, as well as concrete measures of technological innovation and adoption such as patents, steam power implementation in factories, and the establishment of factories in each village. Through an instrumental variables approach, I identify how exposure to Western scientific knowledge causally influenced both technology adoption and spontaneous innovations in Japan during its industrialization.

My future research will explore how societies can foster technological innovation while ensuring responsible development and implementation. Specifically, I aim to continue working at the intersection of innovation, economic history, international economics, and macroeconomic growth. Drawing on my background in economic history and other fields of economics, I would like to study both current and historical episodes of protectionism on innovation that might shed light on two aspects. Firstly, I would love to study the competition in AI between the U.S. and China, focusing on the impact of protectionism and sanctions (e.g. CHIPS Act) on the AI arms race and safety development. Secondly, I also take interest in the diffusion of new technologies like AI in developing countries and its shock to local labor markets and economic growth.

The focus of my work makes the NBER Innovation Boot Camp especially relevant. The program would allow me to engage with leading scholars in innovation economics while developing new methodological approaches to study the adoption and the impact of innovation, both historical and contemporary. Through participation in the Boot Camp, I aim to strengthen my understanding of innovation while building connections with researchers studying similar questions across different contexts and time periods.

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November 25, 2024

Dear director and professors at the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo,

I am writing to recommend Cheryl Wu for the Visiting Research Fellow position at the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo as her advisor.

Cheryl's research plans to examine the role of institutional changes, especially in education, in late Edo and early Meiji Japan's economic growth. The hypothesis is that the incorporation of Dutch Studies into the Japanese curriculum laid an important foundation for propelling Japan onto the global stage of industrial and economic development. I am genuinely impressed by her research aptitude and her excellent academic background and I think she will conduct high quality research as a visiting student.

The visiting scholar position at the University of Tokyo presents a unique opportunity for Cheryl to further her investigation by engaging with leading experts in the field, accessing critical archives, and immersing herself in Japan's rich historical context. Access to the University of Tokyo Library will undoubtedly enrich Cheryl's research. I strongly support Cheryl's application and believe she will make the most of this opportunity to advance her research and contribute to the literature.

Thank you for considering my recommendation and am available to provide any further information you may require.

Sincerely,



Costas Arkolakis
Professor of Economics, Department of Economics, Yale University
Joint Editor, Journal of International Economics