

EconMatters

Faculty Profile

Christos Ntantamis

If one were to travel back in time and tell my 17-year-old self, living in Athens, that he will now be in Canada teaching Economics, they would be stared in complete astonishment. It is not that I wasn't interested in economics, but I could not envision myself working or studying on anything related to that, my strong preference being in engineering or sciences. In Greece, to enter university, you need to take national exams at the end of high school while submitting a list with your preferences over universities (subjects and locations). Depending on your exam grades and on your preferences, you get admitted in a university where you study a very specific subject. It sounds like a lottery, and it can sometimes be one. My first choice being electrical engineering, I was disappointed to be admitted into my sixth choice: Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering at the National Technical University of Athens. It took me one term to realize how wrong I was in that sentiment.



During my engineering studies, I took all available elective courses related to economics and finance, purely out of personal interest. I would have never thought of changing my set career path as an engineer till I encountered Statistics, and in particular Time Series Analysis. There are moments in life when two things that seemed unrelated suddenly connect. To me at the time, the possibility that you can use statistical tools to model economic and financial data was a revelation, and it made me reconsider what I want to do in life; a career in finance was now the most appealing option. Regardless, that would necessitate a change in the direction of my studies, and how else to achieve it by completing a post graduate program: the MSc in Banking and Financial Management in University of Piraeus was a more appealing alternative to an MBA, as I considered it to be more quantitative in nature.

It was during that program when I formally discovered econometrics: the use of statistical tools to describe economic systems. What intrigued me most was the idea that you can develop those tools; I guess that was the engineer in me thinking. Thus, I made the decision, with the strong encouragement of my thesis supervisor, to pursue further studies. In 2003, I arrived in Montreal for my PhD in Economics at McGill University. Why Montreal? Academically-wise, Montreal was, and still is, a hot spot for econometrics, with excellent professors in the subject, and strong collaboration among the city's universities. Life-wise, Montreal is like being in Europe, and for someone like me who had never been out of Greece before, it would feel more like home, if one were to overlook the freezing winters.

Since graduation, my professional experience is divided between academics and the banking sector. I was an Assistant Professor of Economics, in Aarhus University from August 2008 till July 2011, and an Assistant Professor of Economics in Mount Allison University from August 2011 to December 2013. Between 2014 and 2016, I worked as an Econometrician with the Risk Team at the Department of Economics in TD Bank Group at Toronto; my work was mainly about stress testing (scenario generation and modeling) as required by regulators in Canada and USA.

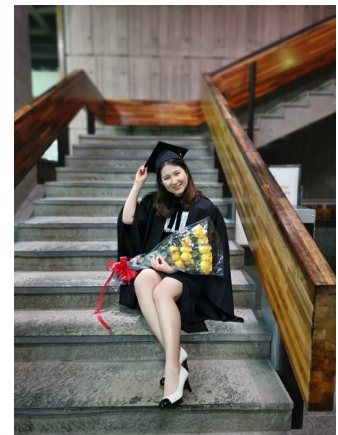
In 2016, I joined the Department of Economics at Dalhousie as an Instructor. I was strongly motivated to come to Halifax where my wife and son were living, so it was opportune that the department had an opening that year. Although my focus is on teaching, I try to continue my research on identification of regimes in economic data. In July 2019, I became the Undergraduate Advisor, and it is in this role that I am happy to see how my own past experiences can now help students.

Alumni Profiles

Ruohan Wang, MA 2019

Hi there! My name is Ruohan Wang. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Economics with Honors in 2018. After finishing undergrad, I chose to continue my study of Economics at Dalhousie University, and achieved my MA degree in 2019.

Coming to Canada and choosing Dalhousie is one of the wisest decisions I have ever made. As an international student from the 2+2(DAL/SDUFE) program, I spent three fulfilling years learning and living at Dalhousie. In addition to gaining knowledge at this amazing institution, I also gained the courage to live independently, being surrounded by a group of enthusiastic and like-minded faculty and friends, who are supportive both inside and outside of the classroom.



After the commencement in June of 2019, I went back to my hometown and spent 2 months vacationing with my family. It was a good chance to unwind and catch up after many years studying abroad, but I also used that opportunity to plan my career direction and build my resume. I dived into job-hunting right after coming back and went to a few job fairs to get more information about the current job market. I was proactive in introducing myself to the hiring managers of the companies that I was interested in; however, they were hiring for positions that didn't match my background and interests, so I didn't have much success. Therefore, after a few months of job searching I decided to take some time to reflect and think carefully about my next course of action. I didn't want to rush into a job that I wasn't satisfied with.

Looking back on my studies at Dalhousie, I realized that I really enjoyed working with data. Normalizing data with models to test proposed hypotheses and mining information behind the data to help real-world decision making was exciting to me! So, with that in mind, I decided to build upon what I already learned by increasing my proficiency in programming languages such as Python and SAS. It was hard for me to land my first job as I had no relevant internship experience, but luckily, one of my friends referred me to a statistics professor. I spent four months doing a series of business analysis projects with him and gained more industry-related experience and insights. At the beginning of 2020, the pandemic really hit the job market hard, but I did not give up and regarded job-hunting as my job, so after months of perseverance, continuously learning and applying to jobs, I was successful. I received an opportunity as a credit risk analyst from an international bank and I secured the position after five rounds of interviews. I really appreciate Professor Ntantamis, Professor Cyrus, and Mrs. Shannon Peng for helping me complete the background check that was required.

I have been working for almost a year now, and I am grateful to have an excellent start to my career and grateful to Dalhousie for preparing me with knowledge and soft skills, such as teamwork, communication and time management. I am sure everyone has gone through a time when there doesn't seem to be any progress no matter how hard you try, but the fact is all your hard work will accumulate and come to fruition as long as you keep working towards your goal!

James Atsu Amegashie, MDE 1998

I am originally from Ghana in West Africa. I graduated with a BA in Economics and Statistics from the University of Ghana in 1991. I taught in Ghana for two years and proceeded to the UK where I got a postgraduate diploma in Economics from the London School of Economics in 1994.

I arrived in Canada in September 1994 and obtained an MA in Economics from Queen's University in 1995. I was interested in development economics (all students from developing countries seem to be interested in development economics), so in late February 1996, I applied for a job as an economist at the International Development Research Center (IDRC) in Ottawa. After my interview on a cold winter's day in Ottawa, the IDRC was interested in hiring me but it could not make me an offer because I did not have the right to work in Canada. Back then the immigration rules in Canada were apparently tougher than they are now. I was still interested in Development Economics. But it was too late to apply to schools for admission in September 1996. So, I waited for a year and got into the Master of Development Economics (MDE) program at Dalhousie in September 1997.



After a year at Dalhousie, I proceeded to Simon Fraser University where I got my PhD in Economics in 2002. When I was on the job market, I came for a job talk at Acadia University in January 2002. I was not too far from Halifax. But my hectic schedule did not allow me to visit Dalhousie. I eventually got a tenure-track assistant professor position in the Economics Department of the University of Guelph, where I have been since July 2002, for almost twenty years. I teach microeconomics and public economics at Guelph and my research interests and published papers are in public economics (especially public choice), development economics, and experimental economics.

Dalhousie Economics is the epitome of "small is beautiful". I had a very good experience in the MDE program. It was exciting to discuss economics and development issues with my mates, some of whom did not have first degrees in Economics or had good intuition in Economics but were not used to the mathematical rigor of a standard MA program in Economics. I also liked the city of Halifax. It was not too big and it was not too small. I had supportive professors like Kuan Xu, Talan İřcan, Melvin Cross, and Ian McAllister. Some years ago, I invited Kuan Xu and Talan İřcan on separate occasions to give seminars at Guelph. My colleagues and I enjoyed their seminars. In 2006, I also gave a talk in the Economics department at Dalhousie. It was good to return to Halifax and Dalhousie.

I am happy to be a Dalhousie alum. Dal and Dal Economics rock!

Huixin Duan, BSc. Honours

As a student of the Dal-SDUFE 2+2 program, I am very glad and thankful that I chose Dalhousie University to be the place where I pursued my dream and forged ahead. Thanks to the patient guidance of my professors and the enthusiastic help of my classmates, I quickly adapted to Canada's learning mode and pace. The faculty of Economics provides students with three graduation options: the bachelor's degree in economics, bachelor's degree with double majors, and the honours degree in economics. The diversification of courses fully certified my passion for economics. With a variety of opportunities provided by Dal for all students regardless of year or program to exchange and study together, I clearly understood the close relationship between curriculum planning and career development from senior students. My inner voice told me that I knew what I wanted and was willing to learn more comprehensive, more in-depth economics courses, so I was determined to complete the honours degree program. Starting from the first course, I scientifically planned the courses and grades for the next two years. Starting from the first assignments and exams, I made full use of strategic thinking and considered how to flexibly achieve A+ in each course step by step based on all the possible scores in mid-term and homework.



The economic thinking guides my daily behavior, makes my goals visible, and then enables me to stride forward solidly and confidently towards success despite challenges. What impressed me most was the sincere care and love of Dal tutors. They are ready for students to ask them questions on various subjects. Even if some questions were childish, they would tell students their answers and the thinking logic behind them in detail. They can remember almost every student who has attended the class and greet them warmly when they meet on the way. They care about the development of the students, just like they treat their family. The deepest impression is when I applied for the graduate program, I have let my favorite and most respected professor who taught my class in my senior year took pains to write me a dozen recommendation letters, the professor would ask me the application progress every time when I met him. He helped me calmly analyze the advantages and disadvantages of each school and helped me make the best choice. I was so grateful to him that I gave him a big hug when I graduated. Finally, I ended my study in Dalhousie University with the Econometrics Prize and the first-class Honours Degree. And I began my study at UBC, which started with the admission scholarship.

The time I studied at Dal brought me not only glory and success, but also courage and persistence. It taught me that dreams are not far away as long as you have a clear plan, determination to work hard, patience and confidence all the time. The effect is still significant today.

After graduating from UBC, I am in charge of non-performing assets management in the head office of Ever-growing Bank in China. With Dal and UBC's learning experience, I continued to use game theory thinking to make my present workplace my optimal choice. Working life is full of unknown challenges in the workplace. Compared with the economics theory and knowledge, the economics thinking guided all my business operations and the interpersonal communication to a great extent. I often think of myself when I was at Dal. That was the way I liked myself the most where I never got flustered or scared. I hope to grow up together with Dal, sticking to the original aspiration and making steady progress.

News

- **Undergraduate Awards 2021**

In December 2021, the Department of Economics held a ceremony and reception for the undergraduate award recipients of 2021.

- **Congratulations to Maxwell Scholarship Award Recipients 2021-2022**

Xinyi Gu, Xu Hua, Chao Jin, Shenghan Li, Tia Olynyk, Ruimin Wang, Yutong Zhang, Jun Zhong, Ziyi Yang, Matthew McKee, Houqi Sun, Yuqi Wang, Yueqi Zhao and Katarina Kandic are the recipients of the Professor W. Maxwell Award for 2021-22