

Weihong Li

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EDUCATION

Southern Methodist University

Dallas, TX

Ph.D. in Economics

May 2025

M.A. in Economics

Dec 2022

Fields: Development Economics, Political Economics, Environmental Economics

Dissertation: Essays on Development Economics, Political Economics, and Environmental Economics

Committee: Klaus Desmet (advisor), Omer Ozak, Wookun Kim

Honors: SMU Full Tuition Scholarship and Teaching Assistantship Award 2019-2024, CSWEP Travel Grant 2022, SMU Graduate Student Travel Grant 2023, SMU Research and Professional Development Award 2023, SMU Provost's Doctoral Candidacy Fellowship 2023-2025, SMU DCII Summer Research Fellowship 2024

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Madison, WI

B.S. in Economics and Mathematics (with honors)

May 2019

Honors: Successful Participant at Mathematical Contest in Modeling 2016,

UW-Madison George Enfield Frazer Jr. Scholarship 2017, UW-Madison Trewartha Honors Research Grant 2018

SKILLS

- **Software:** Stata, R, Python, MATLAB, QGIS, ArcGIS, HTML, CSS, LaTeX, Excel, PowerPoint, Word
- **Languages:** English (Fluent), Chinese (Native), Mongolian (Basic), Russian (Basic), Spanish (Basic)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Department of Economics, Southern Methodist University

Dallas, TX

Doctoral Researcher

Aug 2019 - Present

- Study the strategic behavior of regional officials in response to the inspections of central government leaders in China using changes in PM2.5 levels during these inspections.
- Study the impact of cultural norms and geographic factors on the spatial heterogeneity of fertility choices and sex-selective abortions in China.
- Study the impact of foreign investment on the formation of ethnic enclaves in the United States.
- Obtain China's daily prefecture-level and county-level data on PM2.5, PM10, and thermal inversions from satellite images provided by NASA's MERRA-2 product using R.
- Calculate China's yearly county-level nighttime light intensity, a proxy for economic prosperity, using NOAA's DMSP-OLS Nighttime Lights Time Series and a composition of monthly NPP-VIIRS NTL Time Series.
- Calculate China's county-level terrain ruggedness, a proxy for geographic accessibility, using NASA's ASTER Global Digital Elevation Model version 3.
- Measure the distances between each county-level division in China and its nearest port using R.

Research and Teaching Assistant

Aug 2019 - Present

- Assist with Dr. Klaus Desmet's research.
- Grade weekly homework and midterm exams.
- Proctor exams and answer students' questions.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, Thailand

Economic Affairs Intern

May - Aug 2023

- Built empirical models and wrote Stata scripts to quantitatively analyze the influence of digital trade, infrastructure, and services on achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Methodologies include OLS-FE, OLS with lags, one/two-step difference GMM, one/two-step system GMM, and 2SLS.
- Wrote an essay specifying the models, including a comparison with those applied in other papers.
- Conducted literature reviews and wrote essays on the impact of digital trade, infrastructure, and services on poverty alleviation, environmental protection, disaster reduction, climate change, education access, public health, and women empowerment. The essays have been incorporated into the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2023-2024: Unleashing Digital Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development (<https://www.unescap.org/kp/APTIR2023>).
- Updated and maintained DigiSRII database, which stores country-level data for digital trade studies. Updated R scripts used to generate key variables, along with a manual explaining how to access and download the DigiSRII database.

Department of Economics, Minzu University of China

Beijing, China

Guest Lecturer of GIS Technology

Jun 2022

- Introduced the application of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology in economic research to 32 undergraduate and graduate students from Department of Economics, Minzu University of China.
- Introduced ManeFrame II high-performance computing (HPC) cluster.
- Taught students how to obtain daily county-level PM2.5 data of China from NASA's MERRA-2 product using Python, R, QGIS, and ArcGIS.

State Information Center Affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission

Beijing, China

Research Intern

Jun - Aug 2019

- Estimated the impact of opening the North Sea Route on trade among countries along China's Belt & Road Initiative using Global Forest Products Model.
- Collected data related to imports, exports, and transportation costs of 137 countries, and graphed and analyzed the data using Excel and R.
- Measured the distances among important ports using PortDistance and Google Earth.
- Attended three conferences discussing the difficulties of micro and small enterprises which earned less than 20 thousand yuan per month and suggested that the State Council could exempt the turnover tax for six months.
- Proofread and formatted documents for publication and disseminated materials for various audiences.
- Answered incoming inquiries and assisted with the planning and execution of weekly events.

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

SMU Economics Club

Dallas, TX

Active Member

Jun 2020 - Present

- Assist in organizing and coordinating club activities, including workshops, picnics, and festival celebrations.

UW-Madison Math Club

Madison, WI

Active Member

Sep 2015 - May 2019

- Invited professors to give weekly presentations about their research and attended presentations to learn more about math research topics and issues.
- Helped up to 8 students weekly with math homework.