

**YAACOV (COBY) WITTMAN**

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**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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Placement Director: Holger Sieg	HOLGERS@ECON.UPENN.EDU	215-898-7194
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**Office Contact Information**

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**Personal Information:**

Date of Birth: August 31, 1992  
Sex: Male  
Citizenship: USA, Israel

**Undergraduate Studies:**

B.S., Economics and Mathematics, George Washington University, *summa cum laude*, 2014

**Graduate Studies:**

University of Pennsylvania, 2016 to present

Thesis Title: "Essays in College Investment and Income Inequality"

Expected Completion Date: June 2022

Thesis Committee and References:

Dirk Krueger (Advisor)  
133 South 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104  
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José Víctor Ríos Rull  
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Jesús Fernández-Villaverde  
133 South 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215) 573-1504, jesusfv@econ.upenn.edu

**Teaching and Research Fields:**

Primary fields: Macroeconomics; Inequality

Secondary fields: Household Finance; Economics of Education

**Teaching Experience:**

**Instructor:**

Summer 2020	Game Theory, UPenn
Spring 2019, Summer 2019	International Economics, UPenn

**Teaching Assistant:**

Spring, 2020-2021	Macroeconomic Modeling, UPenn, Teaching Assistant for Professor José Víctor Ríos Rull
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Fall, 2020	Money, Credit, and Banking, UPenn Teaching Assistant for Professor Harold Cole
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Fall, 2019	Economic Growth, UPenn, Teaching Assistant for Professor Joachim Hubmer
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Fall, 2018 Strategic Reasoning, UPenn,  
Teaching Assistant for Professor David Dillenberger

Spring, 2018 Macroeconomic Theory (Graduate), UPenn,  
Teaching Assistant for Professor Jeremy Greenwood

Fall, 2017 Macroeconomic Theory, UPenn,  
Teaching Assistant for Professor Guillermo Ordoñez

**Professional Experience:**

2014 – 2016 Consultant, Bates White Economic Consulting, Washington, D.C.

**Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships:**

2016 – 2021 University Fellowship, University of Pennsylvania  
2014 Hsieh Prize in Economics, George Washington University

**Research Papers:**

“College Admissions and the (Mis)Allocation of Talent” (with Ricardo Marto) ([Job Market Paper](#))

Empirical studies have found that high achieving, low-income students are less likely to apply to selective colleges despite the generous financial aid typically offered. To reconcile this seeming puzzle, we build and estimate a structural model of the U.S. college market featuring tuition discrimination and a decentralized admissions system. Students, who differ in their financial resources and innate ability, apply to a subset of colleges and are uncertain about their prospective admissions and financial aid. Colleges observe only a noisy signal of student ability and compete by choosing admissions standards and tuition schedules. We find that differences in application rates are due to student expectations over admissions and financial aid, which are consistent with college policies in equilibrium. Low-income students receive generous financial aid at selective colleges because only the highest-ability among them apply, making their signals highly informative. If signals became less informative (e.g., colleges stopped using the SAT), all high-ability students would be worse off and only high-income, low-ability students would modestly benefit. Finally, we find overall welfare gains from increasing Federal need-based financial aid, which would greatly benefit low-income, high-ability students by alleviating credit constraints.

**Research Papers in Progress:**

“Earnings Risk, Student Loan Repayment, and College Completion”

This paper studies the effect of student loan repayment policy on college enrollment and completion behavior. Using college student-level data, I show that a student’s grades in a given academic year are predictive of whether the student drops out that year. However, only 15% of students reported dropping out for academic reasons, suggesting that separation is due mostly to student choices rather than academic failure. I then build a model of college enrollment and completion where students learn about their risky future earnings potential and have the option to drop out. The model is calibrated to match key features of the student-level data and is used to study the effects of switching to an income-contingent loan system to improve risk-sharing among college graduates. The model contrasts the benefits of such a system with potential adverse selection created at the enrollment and completion stage, which may be costly in the presence of high tuition levels.

“Financial Intermediation and the Housing Boom and Bust”

**Computational Skills:**

Julia, Stata, MATLAB, R

**Languages:**

English (Native), Hebrew (Intermediate)