

# Scott Kaplan

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## Employment

From 2021 **Assistant Professor of Economics**, United States Naval Academy

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## Education

- 2021 **Ph.D.**, *Agricultural and Resource Economics*, University of California, Berkeley  
Dissertation committee: David Zilberman (Co-Chair), James Sallee (Co-Chair), Benjamin Handel, Sofia Villas-Boas
- 2017 **M.S.**, *Agricultural and Resource Economics*, University of California, Berkeley
- 2014 **B.S. (with honors)**, *Environmental Sciences; Environmental Economics and Policy*, University of California, Berkeley

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## Peer-Reviewed Research

- 2025 **Evaluating the impact of 2011 Tort reform limiting non-economic damages in North Carolina and Tennessee on testing, imaging, and procedure utilization**,  
*Health Services Research*, 6(2): e14424. (with Michael Ellenbogen, Bijan Niknam, Allen Kachalia, and Daniel Brotman)
- 2024 **Evaluation of changes in prices and purchases following implementation of sugar-sweetened beverage taxes across the United States**,  
*JAMA Health Forum*, 5(1): e234737. (with Justin White, Kristine Madsen, Sanjay Basu, Sofia Villas-Boas, and Dean Schillinger)  
*Winner of Emerging Scholar Best Conference Paper at the 2023 Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA) Annual Meeting. Featured on NPR All Things Considered.*  
**Leveling the playing field: The distributional impact of maximum- and minimum-level contracts on player compensation**,  
*Contemporary Economic Policy* 42(2), 375-91.
- 2023 **Evaluation of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax in Oakland, United States, 2015-2019: A quasi-experimental and cost-effectiveness study**,  
*PLOS Medicine*, 20(4): e1004212. (with Justin White, Sanjay Basu, Kristine Madsen, Dean Schillinger, and Sofia Villas-Boas)  
**Adolescent Emergency Department (ED) Visits and Mental Health ED Visits During the COVID-19 Pandemic**,  
*JAMA Network Open* 6(10): e2336463 (with Sofia Villas-Boas, Justin White, and Renee Hsia)  
**Patterns of mental health-related emergency department visits during the COVID-19 pandemic**,  
*JAMA Network Open* 6(7): e2322720. (with Sofia Villas-Boas, Justin White, and Renee Hsia)  
**Trends in depression risk before and during the COVID-19 pandemic**,  
*PLOS ONE*, 18(5): e0285282. (with Sofia Villas-Boas, Justin White, and Renee Hsia)  
**Estimating worldwide benefits from improved bananas resistant to Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4**,  
*Journal of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association* 2(1), 20-34. (with Felipe de Figueredo Silva, Freddy Magdama, Matthew D. Potts, Ramon Leonardo Espinel Martinez, and David Zilberman)

- Pay equality among heterogeneous agents,**  
*Economics Letters* 229: 111188. (with Ryan Hoffman and Ashwin Kambhampati.)  
 Ryan Hoffman's 2023 honors thesis, co-advised with Ashwin Kambhampati.
- 2022 **Putting a Price on Popularity: Evidence from Superstars in the National Basketball Association,**  
*Economic Inquiry* 60(3), 1357-81.
- 2021 **The Impact of Policy Timing on the Spread of COVID-19,**  
*Infectious Disease Modeling*, 6, 942-54. (with Moshe Elitzur, Zeljko Ivezic, and David Zilberman)
- The political economy of COVID-19,**  
*Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 44(1), 477-88. (with David Zilberman and Jacob Lefler)
- 2020 **Higher Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Retail Prices After Taxation in Oakland and San Francisco,**  
*American Journal of Public Health*, 110(7), 1017-23. (with Jennifer Falbe, Matthew Lee, Nadia Rojas, Alberto Ortega Hinojosa, and Kristine Madsen)
- Willingness to Pay vs. Willingness to Vote: Consumer and Voter Avoidance of Genetically Modified Foods,**  
*American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 102(2), 505-24. (with David Zilberman and Gina Waterfield)
- Recycling policies, behavior and convenience: Survey evidence from the CalRecycle program,**  
*Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 43(2), 641-58. (with Peter Berck, Marshall Blundell, Gabriel Englander, Samantha Gold, Shelley He, Janet Horsager, Molly Sears, Andrew Stevens, Carly Trachtman, Rebecca Taylor, and Sofia Villas-Boas)
- Hindered Growth,**  
*Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, 111: 103807. (with Moshe Elitzur and David Zilberman)
- 2019 **Soda Wars: The Effect of a Soda Tax Election on University Beverage Sales,**  
*Economic Inquiry*, 57(3), 1480-96. (with Rebecca Taylor, Sofia Villas-Boas and Kevin Jung)
- The Future of Autonomous Vehicles: Lessons from the Literature on Technology Adoption,**  
*Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 41(4), 583-97. (with Ben Gordon, Feras El-Zarwi, Joan Walker, and David Zilberman)
- 2018 **The Political Economy of Labeling,**  
*Food Policy*, 78, 6-13. (with Ben Gordon and David Zilberman)
- 2015\* **The Loss from Underutilizing GM Technologies,**  
*Agbioforum*, 18(3), 312-19. (with Justus Wesseler and David Zilberman)
- The Political Economy of Biotechnology,**  
*German Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 64(2), 212-23. (with Gregory Graff, Gal Hochman, and David Zilberman)
- 2014\* **Biotechnology and Food Security,**  
*Journal of International Affairs*, 67(2), 91-107. (with Geoffrey Barrows, Eunice Kim, Steven Sexton, and David Zilberman)
- 2013\* **Continents Divided: Understanding Differences on GM Acceptance between Europe and North America,**  
*GM Crops and Food: Biotechnology in Agriculture and the Food Chain*, 4(3), 1-7. (with Gregory Graff, Gal Hochman, Eunice Kim, and David Zilberman)
- Technology and the Future Bioeconomy,**  
*Agricultural Economics*, 44(s1), 95-102. (with Eunice Kim, Sam Kirschner, Jeanne Reeves, and David Zilberman)
- 2012\* **Biofuel and Food-Commodity Prices,**  
*Agriculture*, 2(3), 272-81. (with Gal Hochman, Deepak Rajagopal, and David Zilberman)

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## Working papers

### **Taxing volume, targeting sugar: the impact of sugar-sweetened beverage excise taxes on outcomes associated with taxed and untaxed characteristics** (with Justin White)

This paper develops a framework to understand how excise taxes affect outcomes related to both taxed characteristics of a product and associated, untaxed characteristics. The empirical analysis examines volume-based excise taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs); a primary objective of these taxes is to reduce added sugar intake. Using national high-frequency retail scanner data and a staggered adoption synthetic difference-in-differences (SDID) approach, we study the impacts of volume-based taxes across the US on prices and purchases of volume and sugar from SSBs. First, we find volume-based taxes disproportionately increase the relative price of larger-volume products, increasing the average price per ounce by 4.4% (24.6%) for products in the smallest (largest) product size quartile. Second, we show a specific excise tax generates an equivalent relative price increase on taxed and untaxed characteristics within a product. Finally, volume-based taxes in the US led to (i) larger overall reductions in purchases of ounces of volume (-36.2%) compared to grams of sugar (-31.0%) from SSBs and (ii) smaller increases in the average price/ounce (26.5%) compared to the average price/gram of sugar (40.7%) in SSBs. We find the difference in purchases is plausibly driven by consumer substitution towards products with higher sugar concentrations, especially among the largest-volume products in the Philadelphia taxed jurisdiction. The findings have important implications for specific excise tax structures across different product categories, suggesting it is important to consider heterogeneity across products in both taxed and untaxed characteristics of interest.

### **The impact of publicly-funded business advisory services on firm performance: evidence from the US Small Business Development Center Network** (with Ryan Raimondi)

This paper estimates the impact of publicly-funded advisory services offered to US small businesses on firm performance. We leverage a novel administrative dataset from the Northern California Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network covering all firm-center interactions from 2006–2023. To address endogeneity in firm engagement with centers, we exploit exogenous variation in proximity to centers generated by center closures, openings, and re-locations. We instrument for paired center-business consulting time with changes in distance resulting from these organizational shifts. A one standard deviation reduction in distance between a business and corresponding center ( $\approx 30$  miles) increases average annual consulting time by 0.1 hours; each additional consulting hour raises average annual business revenue and employment by 6.4% and 3.3%, respectively. Back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest these advisory services are highly cost-effective. This study offers the first set of causal evidence on the effectiveness of small business advisory services on firm outcomes in the US. Our findings highlight the importance of accessibility and localized expertise in shaping small business outcomes, which may be particularly important in under-served industries and geographies.

### **Preferences and demand for information that entertains** (with Oskar Zorrilla. *Previously circulated under the titles "Entertainment Utility from Skill and Thrill" and "Entertainment Demand from Expectations."*)

This paper uses revealed preference methods to estimate demand for non-instrumental information in entertainment. We apply and extend the theory presented in Ely, Frankel, and Kamenica (2015, JPE) to conduct an empirical analysis that examines the effect of suspense and surprise on consumer demand. We first introduce alternative definitions of suspense and surprise using the theory of mutual information, and prove that suspense is in fact expected surprise. We then estimate the impact of suspense and surprise on television viewership using play-by-play and high-temporal frequency television ratings data from the National Basketball Association (NBA). Our primary results suggest that a one standard deviation increase in suspense increases viewership by 2.53% - 2.91%, while surprise, intuitively, has no impact. These findings have important implications for entertainment media companies, including leagues and television broadcasters, advertisers, and policy-makers, particularly those interested in addictive behavior.

## Works in progress

### **The fear of first strike: quantitative theory of delayed punishments** (with Jacek Rothert)

**Are consumers willing to pay to avoid price uncertainty? Evidence from the vehicle leasing market** (with Andy Hultgren and Derek Wolfson)

**Environmental regulation, market structure, and intellectual property** (with David Zilberman)

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## Conference and invited presentations

- 2025 West Point Social Science Seminar; University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC); George Mason University (GMU); Fife First Annual Applied Microeconomics Conference (Presenter and Discussant); American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon) Annual Meeting\*; Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) Annual Meeting
- 2024 Allied Social Sciences Associations (ASSA) Annual Meeting; University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC); Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA) Annual Meeting; Liberal Arts College Public and Labor (LAC-PaL) Seminar Series; Association of Public Policy and Management (APPAM) Research Conference (Presenter and Discussant)
- 2023 Allied Social Sciences Associations (ASSA) Annual Meeting; Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA) Annual Meeting; Cornell University; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC); Southern Economic Association (SEA) Annual Meeting\*
- 2022 Southern Economic Association (SEA) Annual Meeting (x3)
- 2021 United States Naval Academy
- 2020 Auburn University; NYU Stern Marketing Seminar; UC Berkeley Haas School of Business Marketing Seminar Series; UC Berkeley IO Seminar Series; North American Association of Sports Economics (NAASE) Annual Meeting; Reading University ROSES Seminar in Sports Economics
- 2019 Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) Annual Meeting; Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (AERE) Annual Meeting\*; BERCKonomics Memorial Conference
- 2018 UC Berkeley Environmental and Resource Economics (ERE) Seminar
- 2017 21st Annual International Consortium on Applied Bioeconomy Research; Tufts University Future of Food and Nutrition Conference
- 2016 Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) Annual Meeting

\*Coauthor presentation    †Scheduled

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## Teaching Publications, Books, and Technical Reports

- 2023 **Environmental and Resource Economics: Theory and Practice**, *Lecture Notes in Economics and Policy: Volume 17. World Scientific*. (with David Wells Roland-Holst and David Zilberman)  
  
**Teaching Water Economics: Dynamic and Political Economy Perspectives**, *Applied Economics Teaching Resources (AETR)*, 5(3). (with David Zilberman, Alice Huang, and Lanie Goldberg.)  
Paper in special issue titled "Contemporary Adjustments Needed for Teaching Water Economics in Light of Challenges Facing the Water Sector and its Users."
- 2018 **Convenient beverage recycling in California. A report to the California state legislature** (with Peter Berck, Gabriel Englander, Samantha Gold, Shelley He, Janet Horsager, Molly Sears, Andrew Stevens, Carly Trachtman, Rebecca Taylor, and Sofia Villas-Boas)

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## Teaching

- 2023 – **Environmental and Natural Resource Economics**, Department of Economics (FE485A, United States Naval Academy)

- 2023 – **Math with Economics Senior Capstone**, Department of Economics (SA475E, United States Naval Academy)
- 2022 **Quantitative Economics Senior Capstone**, Department of Economics (SE475, United States Naval Academy)
- 2021 – **Econometrics**, Department of Economics (SE445, United States Naval Academy)
- 2019 – 2021 **First Time Graduate Student Teaching Workshop**, Graduate Student Instructor Center (UC Berkeley)
- 2017 – 2020 **Economics Summer Bootcamp**, Masters of Development Practice (UC Berkeley)
- 2018 **Introductory Applied Econometrics**, Environmental Economics & Policy (Env. Econ. 118, UC Berkeley)

### Teaching Assistant

- 2018 – 2020 **Economics of Sustainable Resource Development**, Masters of Development Practice (DEVP 222, UC Berkeley)

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## Advising

- 2025 **Ryan Raimondi**, *United States Naval Academy*, "Assessing the Impact of Small Business Development Centers on Business Growth: Evidence from the NorCal SBDC Network" (co-advisor with Darrell Glaser)
- 2023 **Ryan Hoffman**, *United States Naval Academy*, "Pay Equality Among Heterogeneous Agents" (co-advisor with Ashwin Kambhampati)  
Received the *Clair E. Morris Prize* for Best Honors Project in the Department of Economics and the *Naval Intelligence Foundation Award* for Best Honors Project at the United States Naval Academy for the Class of 2023.  
**Jordan Brooks, Paul Kim, and Cameron Woods**, *Naval Postgraduate School (NPS)*, "O-3 retention: Monetary vs. quality of life factors—is money the solution?" (co-advisor with Marco DiRenzo (NPS))
- 2022 **Haydn Tidball**, *United States Naval Academy*, "The Effect of a Suspension of Ridesharing Services on DUI Rates" (co-advisor with Karen Thierfelder)  
**Ellie Kroskirty**, *UC Berkeley*, "Examining the Impact of Native American Welfare Policies on Socioeconomic Well-Being: Evidence from the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934" (co-advisor with Sofia Villas-Boas)

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## Policy and Media

### Publications

- 2025 **How To Improve Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Taxes**, *Health Affairs Forefront*, July 2025 (with Sofia Villas-Boas)
- 2024 **California vs. Big Soda**, *Asterisk Magazine*, Issue 06: *California*.
- 2019 **Preferences for GMOs: Do purchasing patterns differ from voting behavior?**, *ARE Update* (with Gina Waterfield and David Zilberman)  
**Lessons from Berkeley's sugar-sweetened beverage election and tax**, *ARE Update* (with Rebecca Taylor and Sofia Villas-Boas)  
**Did Zion's 'shoe explosion' actually impact Nike's value?**, *Fansided: Nylon Calculus*
- 2014 **The cost of delaying approval of Golden Rice**, *ARE Update* (with Justus Wesseler and David Zilberman)

**The political economy of biofuel,**

*Choices* (with Gal Hochman, Eunice Kim, and David Zilberman)

**An overview of California's agricultural adaptation to climate change,**

*ARE Update* (with David Zilberman)

**Interviews and Mentions**

**SSB Taxes:** NPR, CNN, US News & World Report, Axios, Fox Business, USA Today, Yahoo, Scholastic News, JAMA Medical News in Brief, ABC7 Bay Area, CBS Bay Area, Philadelphia Inquirer, Food Fix, Route Fifty, Chicago Booth Review, KCBS Radio, Berkeley News, AusTaxPolicy Blog, Breakthroughs Magazine, NBC Bay Area, San Francisco Chronicle, The Daily Californian

**Superstars and Ticket Prices:** ESPN (Outside the Lines - live on-camera interview), Business Insider, NBC Sports, The Action Network, MIT Sloan Management Review, Basketball Illuminati, TrueHoop

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**Fellowships and prizes**

- 2025 **Best Conference Abstract (Food, Nutrition, and Physical Activity Program Area)**, American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon) 2025 Annual Conference  
**Miller Fellowship**, United States Naval Academy (\$10,000)  
**Stockdale Center Generative AI Workshop Fellowship**, United States Naval Academy (\$2,500)
- 2024 **Junior Naval Academy Research Council (NARC) Award**, United States Naval Academy (\$30,000)
- 2023 **Emerging Scholar Best Conference Paper Award**, Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA) Annual Meeting  
**Junior Naval Academy Research Council (NARC) Award**, United States Naval Academy (\$25,000)  
**Volgenau Fellowship**, United States Naval Academy (\$15,000)
- 2022 **Junior Naval Academy Research Council (NARC) Award**, United States Naval Academy (\$22,500)
- 2021 **Volgenau Fellowship**, United States Naval Academy (\$12,500)
- 2020 **Graduate Remote Instruction Innovation Fellowship**, UC Berkeley (\$4,000)
- 2019 **Sacheti Family Fellowship**, UC Berkeley (\$2,500)  
**Sloan Sports Analytics Conference: Best Poster Winner**, MIT (\$500)
- 2016 – 2018 **National Science Foundation Data Science Fellowship**, UC Berkeley (\$52,000)
- 2015 **Honorable Mention, Quality of Communication Award (for "An Overview of California's Agricultural Adaptation to Climate Change")**, Agricultural and Applied Economics Association
- Earlier **Sponsored Program for Undergraduate Research (SPUR) Grant**, UC Berkeley (\$500)  
**Leadership Scholarship**, UC Berkeley (\$2000)  
**Horace Albright Memorial Scholarship**, UC Berkeley (\$2000)

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**Professional and University service**

**Journal Referee (alphabetical order)**, Agricultural Economics, American Journal of Agricultural Economics (AJAE), American Journal of Health Economics (AJHE), American Journal of Preventative Medicine (AJPM), Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy (AEPP), Applied Economics, Applied Economics Letters (AEL), Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics, Economic Inquiry (EI), Economic Journal (EJ), Food Science & Nutrition, Industrial Relations, International Journal of Sport Finance (IJSF), Journal of Environmental Economics and Management (JEEM), Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (JPAM), Journal of Sustainable Forestry, Journal of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (JAAEA), Journal of Sport Management, Marketing Science, PLOS Medicine, PLOS ONE, Public Health Nutrition, Sports Economics Review

**Grant Proposal Referee**, US-Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund (BARD)

**United States Naval Academy**, Naval Academy Research Council (2025 - Present), Economics Department Self-Study Committee (2025), Research Advisory Council (2024 - Present), Economics Department Research Seminar Co-Founder and Co-Organizer (2022; 2023), Economics Department Awards Committee (2022 - Present)

**UC Berkeley**, Rausser College of Natural Resources Alumni Board Member (2017-22); Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP) Mentor (2017-20); Graduate Admissions Committee, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics (2019); Giannini Foundation Agricultural and Resource Economics Student Conference Co-Organizer (2018)

**Miscellaneous**, Big Brothers and Sisters of America (BBSA) Big Brother (2020-21)