Neha Betai

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Washington, DC | Citizenship: India

Placement Coordinators

Faculty: Chao Wei (cdwei@gwu.edu); Administration: Grace Lee (gwueconjm@gmail.com), (202) 994-6150

Education

George Washington University
Ph.D. Economics, *Expected May 2027*; M.S. Economics, 2024
Student Member, AI Economics Program, Center for Economic Research, GWU

Centre for Development Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
M.A. Applied Economics, 2019

St. Xavier's College, Mumbai
B.A. Economics, 2017

Fields

Primary: International Trade, Labor Economics
Secondary: Economics of AI, Technological Change, Development Economics

Working Papers

"How Workers Invest in Artificial Intelligence: Experimental Evidence from Global Labor Platforms" *Job Market Paper*

"Automation without Borders: Generative AI and Cross-Border Service Outsourcing" (with Maggie X. Chen) *Journal of International Economics, Revise & Resubmit*

On-going research

"What Drives Demand for AI Governance?" (with Maggie X. Chen)

"Generative AI and Competition in Online Labor Markets" (with Rodimiro Rodrigo and Zhao Xue)

"Unlocking Choices: The Impact of Credit Availability on Product Mix — Evidence from India" (with Shatakshi Gupta)

Pre-PhD Publications

"The Skilled South Asian Diaspora in the OECD" (with Rupa Chanda). In *Routledge Handbook of Asian Diaspora and Development*. Routledge, 2021.

"Implications of Brexit for Skilled Migration from India to the UK" (with Rupa Chanda). *Foreign Trade Review*, 56(3), 289–300, 2021.

Fellowships, Grants & Awards

Mercatus Fellowship, 2026–2027
Sara and Brita Levitan Excellence in Teaching Award, GWU, 2026
CIBER Research Grant, 2024–2025
Dunn and Kendrick Endowed Award, GWU, 2024
John Whitefield Kendrick Graduate Fellowship in Economics, GWU, 2022
Joan Robinson Prize for Academic Excellence in the M.A. program, CDS, 2019

Research Assistantships

Research Assistant to Prof. Joseph Pelzman, GWU (Summer 2023)
Research Assistant to Prof. Chao Wei, GWU (Summer 2022)
Research Assistant to Prof. Rupa Chanda, IIM, Bangalore (2019–2021)

Professional Experience

Academic Associate, IIM, Bangalore (2019–2021)
Research Intern, NABARD, Mumbai (Summer 2018)

Teaching

Instructor on Record
Principles of Economics I, GWU (Summer 2024)
Global Politics, Johns Hopkins CTY (Summer 2022)

Teaching Assistant
Survey of International Economics, GWU (Spring 2024, 2025, 2026)
Principles of Economics I, GWU (Fall 2021, 2024, 2025; Spring 2022)
International Trade and Economics, GWU (Fall 2022, 2023; Spring 2023)
Managerial Economics, IIM, Bangalore (2020–2021)

Seminars & Conferences

2026: Washington Area International Trade Symposium (*Poster*); Graduate Student Seminar, GWU; Brown Bag, GWU; NABE†; NEUDC†
2025: HKUST-Fudan-NUS Conference on International Economics*; IGC–Yale 2025 Firms, Trade, and Development Conference*
2024: Washington Area International Trade Symposium (*Poster*); Development Tea, GWU
2022: Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, Delhi
2021: Web Conference on Economic Theory and Policy, NIPFP
2020: Web Conference on "Trade and Development", IGIDR, Mumbai
* Presented by co-author; † Scheduled

Academic Service

Development Tea Organizer, GWU, 2023–2026

Skills

Programming: Python, Stata, MATLAB, SQL, Excel, R
Languages: English (fluent); Hindi (fluent); French (DELF B1)

References

Maggie X. Chen
Professor of Economics and International Affairs
George Washington University
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Associate Professor of Economics
George Washington University
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Rodimiro Rodrigo
Assistant Professor of Economics
George Washington University
School of Business
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Steven Suranovic (*Teaching Reference*)
Associate Professor of Economics and International Affairs
George Washington University
smsuran@gwu.edu

Neha Betai

How Workers Invest in Artificial Intelligence: Experimental Evidence from Global Labor Platforms
(Job Market Paper)

How do workers decide how much to invest in AI? I survey a global sample of online platform workers and document a puzzle: adoption and reported productivity gains are high, yet investment in AI tools and learning remains low. The pattern cannot be entirely explained by income or AI exposure, and it persists among workers who report large gains. I develop a model of AI investment along two margins, the money workers spend and the time they commit, and test it in a randomized controlled trial. I compare an experiential Effective Use treatment, which gives actionable guidance on better using AI to the workers, with two treatments conveying Labor-Market information framed as disruption or opportunity. Across both margins, workers' investment intentions increase as expected returns rise, and money responds to returns more strongly than time. The Effective Use treatment further raises willingness to pay for AI tools, whereas information about Labor-Market disruption or opportunity does not produce comparable effects. No treatment raises intended training on average, but this null masks underlying heterogeneity. Intended time investment rises among workers predisposed toward AI, through experience, lack of skepticism, or a perceived stake in it. AI adoption may be widespread, but investment depends on prior work use, trust, expected returns and how workers learn about them.

Automation without Borders: Generative AI and Cross-Border Service Outsourcing
(with Maggie X. Chen) *Journal of International Economics, Revise & Resubmit*

The cross-border outsourcing of codifiable cognitive work to developing countries has been a resilient engine of services trade and a pathway to export-led development. This paper examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes service outsourcing and redistributes its gains. Using granular transaction data linking clients, workers, and 2,700 skills on a global digital-services platform from 2022 to 2024, together with a novel capability-based measure of skill-level automation exposure, we trace adjustments on both sides of the market. We find that underneath the aggregate contraction of outsourcing—concentrated in developing countries—lies significant restructuring in how buyers and workers trade. Buyers transact less frequently while consolidating into fewer, larger, and more complex contracts. Workers complete fewer contracts but earn more per engagement, narrowing the skills they supply while winning work in AI-complementary and interaction-intensive tasks. Adaptation is highly uneven: experienced, higher-rated workers reallocate successfully while others contract, and within-skill concentration rises by 14 percentage points as those best positioned to adapt capture a growing share of a shrinking market. A task-based trade framework rationalizes these patterns: by compressing the cross-border wage–productivity arbitrage in routine tasks, generative AI shifts comparative advantage and redistributes the gains from digital-services trade across countries and workers. Because the technology's benefits and its adjustment costs accrue to different labor markets, the findings bear directly on whether AI narrows or widens global human-capital and income gaps.