

Swiss Epidemiology Winter School 2026



Causal Inference in Observational Epidemiology 19 – 21 January 2026

Faculty	Prof. Miguel Hernan Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, USA Prof. Marcel Zwahlen Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Bern, Switzerland
Venue	CH – 3823 Wengen SWITZERLAND Hotel Jungfraublick
Course description	Causal inference from observational data is a key task of epidemiology and of allied disciplines such as behavioural sciences and health services research. Commonly used statistical methods estimate association measures which cannot always be causally interpreted, even when all potential confounders are included in the analysis. In contrast, a causally explicit approach formally defines causal effects, identifies the conditions required to estimate causal effects without bias, and uses analytical methods that, under those conditions, provides estimates that can be endowed with a causal interpretation. This course presents such framework for causal inference from observational data and recent methodological developments, with a special emphasis on complex longitudinal data. The application of these methods will be illustrated using data from a synthetic HIV cohort study. The course is aimed at epidemiologists, statisticians, and other researchers who work with longitudinal observational data.
Course objectives	By the end of this short course participants will have <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-depth understanding of confounding and selection bias• Understanding of the role and potential of different methodological approaches to overcome these problems, including inverse probability weighting, marginal structural models and nested structural models• Practical data analyses implementing these methods using Stata® or R software

Course audience	The course is aimed at epidemiologists, statisticians, and other researchers who work with longitudinal observational data. Stata® or R (https://www.r-project.org/) will be used for the computer practical sessions, and so familiarity with one of the two software applications is desirable, although code and solutions will be provided.												
Course outline	<p>The course runs over three days and consists of lectures, group work, and computer practical sessions.</p> <p>We start early in the morning by reviewing the previous day. During the extended afternoon break, participants review course materials, catch up on email, or ski. We reconvene at 4:30 pm for the computer sessions.</p> <p><i>Monday, 19 January</i> <i>8:00 am – 12:00 pm 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm</i></p> <p><i>Tuesday, 20 January</i> <i>8:00 am – 12:00 pm 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm</i></p> <p><i>Wednesday, 21 January</i> <i>8:00 am – 12:00 pm 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm</i></p>												
Credits	1.0 ECTS												
Course materials	Bring a portable computer. A temporary course license for Stata® will be available to install before arrival. Instructions how to install Stata or R on your laptops will also be provided. Onsite University of Bern IT staff provides support upon e-mail (it.ispm@unibe.ch) request.												
Course book	The course book— <i>Causal Inference: What If (2020)</i> —by M.A. Hernán and J.M. Robins is available on the link provided.												
Course fee	<table> <tr> <td>PhD Bern Students:</td> <td>CHF</td> <td>600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PhD Students:</td> <td>CHF</td> <td>800</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Academic:</td> <td>CHF</td> <td>1'000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Industry:</td> <td>CHF</td> <td>2'000</td> </tr> </table>	PhD Bern Students:	CHF	600	PhD Students:	CHF	800	Academic:	CHF	1'000	Industry:	CHF	2'000
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Registration	Register on the Winter School website . Pre-registration will open on 11 August 2025 at 12:00 (CET) and close on 17 August 2025 at 23:59 (CET).												
Accommodation	Book your accommodation separately. Please see recommendations for special prices on our Website.												