

**Title: Space Exploration**

**Speaker: Prof. Suraj Malladi, Northwestern University**

**Area: Economics**

**Date: 12.02.2026, Venue: K21 @ 4PM**

**Abstract:**

We study search in settings where similar options yield similar payoffs. We develop a rational model of directed search with learning, where payoffs follow a random walk with bounded steps, and derive a partial characterization of optimal search for an otherwise intractable dynamic problem. We test these predictions in a controlled experiment that conveys correlations to participants in a simple way. Participants largely behave in line with the model, adjusting their search behavior with the strength and pattern of correlations. These results challenge the standard assumption of uncorrelated payoffs in search models used in empirical work.

**Speaker Profile:**



Suraj is an Assistant Professor in Managerial Economics and Decisions Sciences at Kellogg School of Management. He works on spatial search, learning, and networks. His recent work has been published in American Economic Review.

**Webpage Link:**

<https://sites.google.com/view/surajm/home?authuser=1>