

# – Making a Difference – Syllabus

*Making a Difference is a multidisciplinary online course designed to empower you to make a positive impact in the world while employing an informed systematic approach. Throughout the course, you will acquire analytical tools for assessing and prioritizing different opportunities, and reflect on theoretical and moral considerations for key life choices. Each lesson will also introduce you to a new cause area with promising opportunities for impact and provide generalizable tools that will be useful regardless of what causes you're passionate about.*

Enroll for free:

[Making a Difference I: Evidence-based Impact](#) | [Making a Difference II: High Stakes](#)



## Making a Difference I: Evidence-based Impact

### **Lesson 1 – Introduction to Making a Difference**

In this lesson we will learn about our unprecedented ability to impact the lives of thousands of people or more. We'll learn about some of the most impactful interventions in history, but also see how some interventions can even cause harm.

This will help us understand the advantages of data and evidence-driven approaches to making a difference and establish the course goals and plan.

### **Main Subjects:**

- How using data and evidence can help increase our impact by orders of magnitude
- Common biases and misconceptions that undermine our decision-making and ability to help others
- Considering the consequences of our actions, alongside other moral considerations

## **Lesson 2 – Effectiveness & Global Health**

In this lesson, we will acquire some preliminary tools that help answer the question “what works?”, and familiarize ourselves with the importance of cost-effectiveness, measurement, evaluation, and feedback. Furthermore, we will study our first cause area – Global Health.

### **Main Subjects:**

- Measurement and evaluation
- Cost-effectiveness analysis
- Marginal cost-effectiveness and diminishing marginal returns
- Quantifying impact in Global Health
- Promising interventions & opportunities in Global Health
- Two pillars of decision making: facts & values



## Lesson 3 – Tackling Uncertainty & Global Development

In this lesson we'll get to know advanced decision-making tools that can tackle the complexities of reality – including when we have uncertainty about the outcome of our actions. We will also discuss what impact really means. Finally, we will learn about the cause area of Global Development and present concrete opportunities for making a difference in the field.

### Main Subjects:

- Counterfactual thinking, opportunity cost, replaceability, and uncertainty
- Expected cost-effectiveness, and risk aversion
- Getting high-quality evidence: controlled trials and RCTs
- Promising interventions & opportunities in Global Development
- The challenge of prioritizing promising interventions

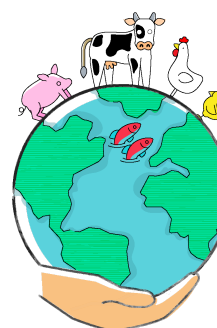


## Lesson 4 – The Expanding Circle & Animal Welfare

Who deserves moral consideration, or even our personal concern? How has the answer to this question changed throughout human history? In this lesson, we will address these questions, and dive into the issue of animal rights and how to act in this cause area effectively.

### Main Subjects:

- The Drowning Child thought experiment
- The Expanding Circle of moral concern
- Understanding the state of animal welfare



- Measuring the welfare harms suffered by animals
- Promising interventions & opportunities in Animal Welfare

---

## Making a Difference II: High Stakes

### Lesson 5 – Global Catastrophic Risk

From nuclear weapons and epidemics to climate change, artificial intelligence, and violent cosmic events, numerous risks have global catastrophic consequences. In this lesson, beginning the course's second part, we will focus on areas with less conclusive evidence but higher stakes and potential impact. We will also start addressing cause area prioritization using a systematic framework.

#### Main Subjects:

- Global Catastrophic Risks (GCRs): Anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic
- Assessing the risk from GCRs
- Inter-cause prioritization challenge
- The ITN framework: Importance, Tractability, Neglectedness
- Promising interventions & opportunities in GCRs



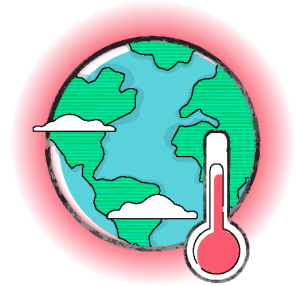
### Lesson 6 – Climate Change

In this lesson we will deep-dive into the field of climate change. We'll understand why many see this problem as the most important challenge of the 21st century. We will also utilize this discussion as a case study for making impact-focused

decisions, initiating new projects, and prioritizing real-world interventions under significant uncertainty and complexity.

### **Main Subjects:**

- Understanding the state and possible trajectories of Climate Change
- On the importance of expert opinion
- Choosing between climate interventions: a case study
- Promising interventions & opportunities in Climate Change



## **Lesson 7 – Biological Risk**

In this lesson, we will explore biological risks and pandemic preparedness and response. We'll focus on worst-case scenarios — disease outbreaks severe enough to pose global catastrophic risks. Additionally, we will introduce analytical tools for estimating with scarce evidence and apply them to assess biological risks

### **Main Subjects:**

- Understanding Biological Risks - both natural and man-made
- Prioritization and assessment with limited empirical data
- Existing work in pandemic prevention, detection and response
- Promising interventions & opportunities in Biological Risks



## **Lesson 8 – AI Risk**

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is a field that's moving so rapidly that it's hard to follow, let alone predict. While AI shows great promise, it's crucial to acknowledge the complexities and responsibilities that its advancement brings. In this lesson, we'll examine the potential harms AI can cause, both immediately and in the long term, and discuss strategies for mitigating these risks.

### **Main Subjects:**

- Understanding Artificial Intelligence: a crash course
- Risks from current and future AI
- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)
- Existing work on AI safety and security
- Promising interventions & opportunities in Artificial Intelligence Risks



## **Lesson 9 – High Impact Careers**

How do you choose a career with significant positive impact, and successfully follow through? In this lesson we will learn how to analyze the impact of different career paths, while examining which ones are a good fit for you personally. We'll also cover key insights that can help advance your career regardless of what field you're in.

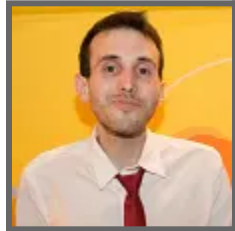
### **Main Subjects:**

- Does money = happiness?
- The makings of an impactful career
- Finding a good fit
- Paths to impact: direct work, research careers, professional services
- Career capital



---

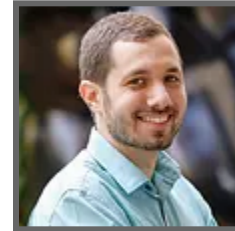
## Course Instructors



**Dan Lahav**

Dan is the Co-Founder and CEO of Pattern Labs - an organization dedicated to securing advanced technology. He also co-founded Impact Focused Education, which aims to develop an effective educational path for engaging in large-scale high-impact work.

Beyond that, Dan co-created and taught academic courses on topics such as Applied Ethics, received TAU's "Outstanding Lecturer Award" (thrice), co-authored an AI paper that was featured on the cover of Nature, won IBM's 'Outstanding Technical Achievement Award', and was crowned Best Speaker of The World at the World Universities Debating Championship where he holds the all-time personal ranking record for a non-native English speaker.



**Sella Nevo**

Sella Nevo is the director of the RAND Corporation's Meselson Center, dedicated to reducing risks from biological threats and emerging technologies. He is also a Venture Partner at the VC firm Firsttime, which invests in climate startups, and is on the advisory board of ALLFED - the Alliance to Feed the Earth In Disasters.

He previously led the Karmel group at Google Research, which developed the Google Flood Forecasting Initiative, which provides flood forecasts and warnings globally, alongside several other humanitarian and environmental efforts. He also co-founded an impact-focused career advising nonprofit and taught Applied Ethics and Information Security at Tel Aviv University.