
I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In today’s world, 840 million people are malnourished, nearly 1.3 billion people live on less than a dollar per day and poverty and inequality have proven to be stubbornly resilient against attempts to decrease them over the past 50 years. This class provides an introduction to contemporary research on development issues. It covers a large set of topics, including historical legacies, specific challenges relating to health, education, and gender, the role of institutions in development, and the impact of policies aiming to empower the world’s poor.

The course will combine short introductory lectures with discussions of contemporary research papers and student presentations of country studies on the sessions’ topic. Overall, the course will give students an understanding of the core challenges faced by developing countries – unquestionably one of the most important public policy concerns of our time.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1) Substantive Objectives

The first half of the course will be devoted to core challenges of economic, social, and political development. After this part, students should be able to

- appreciate the implications of different development definitions
- understand some of the core challenges of development
- appreciate the role political institutions might play for development

The second part of the course is devoted to development policies. The core emphasis is on research on what works and what doesn’t as development tools. To a lesser extent, we will look into debates about the general approach to development. After this part, students should be able to

- appreciate effects of some instruments of development (e.g. conditional cash transfers, micro finance)
- have an understanding of the (non)effects of international aid
- know core debates around international development aid

2) Skills

- understand principles of programme evaluation, namely randomized control trials. This method is currently the gold standard in development research, and many policy recommendations are based on findings from RCTs. Many papers we will discuss use this method.
- enhance presentation skills (slides and oral)
- critical assessment of research; not all published work is necessarily convincing. Students will learn to identify the weak (and strong) point of papers and learn to articulate what they buy and what they don’t buy - and why.

III. REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

1) Requirements

Each student will be required

a) to present one reading in class.

- Pick one of the readings from the “required” list at the beginning of the course. I will send you a doodle link after the first session where you have to sign up for a reading. Be aware that if you take too long to make up your mind, your preferred reading might no longer be available.

- You will present this reading in the respective section in about 20 Minutes. Half of your time should be devoted to presenting the core findings of the paper, the other half to a critical comment of the paper. At the end of your presentation, you should highlight three points for further discussion.
Look at the “checklist for commenting on papers” on pages 3-4 at this link: http://www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/2010_Syllabus.pdf. Make sure you read until the very end until “unacceptable criticisms”. You will be required to use slides for your presentation and send them to me one day before your presentation.

Please don’t read your presentation; it makes it harder to follow.

b) present one country study in class.

At the beginning of the course, pick a country/topic on which you present. For example, in the session on education, you could be talking about challenges about education quality in South Africa, in the session on conditional cash transfers, you could look into Brazil’s Bolsa Escola programme. As for the readings, I will set up a doodle where you need to sign up for a specific date.

This is more of a policy oriented than an academic exercise. Make sure you provide some figures on the country’s background and core development challenges.

You will be required to use slides for your presentation and send them to me one day before your presentation.

International students may not present on their own country.

c) write a seminar paper. You will be required to write a seminar paper with around 3000 words. This paper can be based on your country presentation/discussion of readings. The deadline for handing in your paper is 28 February 2016.

Depending on the class size, we might form groups for some of the presentations. Your seminar paper needs to be an individual exercise.

2) Grading Policy

- Presentation of Reading: 25%
- Country Presentation: 25%
- Seminar Paper: 50%

IV. GENERAL RULES

I will not take attendance but your attendance is expected.

Treat your fellow students’ presentations and comments with the respect you would like to receive yourself.

You are welcome to contact me by email but please do think about whether your email is really necessary. Please do not send me emails with questions that could be answered by reading this syllabus carefully.

V. COURSE SCHEDULE
Part 1: Introduction (Session 1-3)

Core Questions: What do we mean by development? How well do the standard economic measures capture the process of development? How good are alternative measures? In which ways do historical legacies impact on present-day economics and societies in developing countries? Are different types of colonial regimes better or worse for present-day development?

Session 1, 14 October 2015: Thematic Introduction, Course Description, Assignments

• Thematic Introduction on
  ○ terms: “Development, Under-Development, Third World, Global South”
  ○ Theories of Development
  ○ Development issues from another perspective. John Stewart and Trevor Noah on the Daily Show https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHO1a1kvZGo

Session 2, 21 October 2015: Defining and Measuring Development

• Required

• Recommended: Look into the Development Conceptions articulated in
  ○ Human Development Index, Millennium Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goals

Session 3, 28 October 2015: Session 3: Historical Legacies

• Required

- Recommended
  - Sachs, Chapter 2

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**Part 2: Issues in Development (Session 4-6)**

**Core questions:** What are the main challenges of improving educational and health outcomes in developing countries? Why do health workers and teachers not come to work? How are gender empowerment and development linked?

**Session 4, 4 November 2015: Health**

- **required**

- **recommended**
  - Browse research on [http://www.povertyactionlab.org/health](http://www.povertyactionlab.org/health)

**Session 5, 11 November 2015: Education**

- **required**


- recommended


**Session 6, 18 November 2015: Gender**

- required:
  - Women’s Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa. [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctpimr/research/ELA.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctpimr/research/ELA.pdf)

- recommended

**Part 3: Institutions and Governance (9-12)**

**Core questions:** Is there a relationship between regime type and economic performance? Is the resource curse inevitable? How do corruption and clientelism impact on economic development?

**Session 7. 25 November 2015: Institutions and Growth**

- required

- **recommended**:

**Session 8, 2 December 2015: The Resource Curse**

- **required**

- **recommended**

**Session 9, 9 December 2015: Corruption/Clientelism**

- **required**

- **recommended**

**Part 4: Development Policies**

**Core questions**: How can poor people be empowered? What are the lessons of policies seeking to strengthen voters’ voice, human resources, and entrepreneurship in developing countries?
Session 10, 16 December 2015: Strengthening Accountability

- required

- recommended

Session 11, 6 January 2016: Conditional Cash Transfers

- required:

- recommended:

Session 12, 13 January 2016: Microfinance

- required
  - Buckley, Graeme. "Microfinance in Africa: Is it either the problem or the solution?." World development 25, no. 7 (1997): 1081-1093.

- recommended

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**Part 5: International Aid**

Core questions: Does economic aid and democracy promotion work? Are there better ways of spending development aid? Planners vs. searchers

**Session 13, 20 January 2016: Economic aid**

- videos: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJLqyuxm96k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJLqyuxm96k)

- required:
  - discuss perspectives expressed in Easterly. White Man's Burden (chapters *** vs. Sachs chapters ***

**Session 14, 27 January 2016: Democracy Promotion**

- required:

- recommended

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*******COURSE EVALUATION*******
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