

# AAE 477 - AGRICULTURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA

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Fall 2018  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
Agricultural and Applied Economics  
**Meeting location:** Nutritional Sciences 290  
**Meeting time:** MW 2:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.  
**Office hours:** W 4-6 p.m. (in my La Follette office)  
**Canvas course URL:**  
<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/103383/>

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## What is this course about?

In this course we will analyze the economic problems and development strategies of countries on the African continent. Together we will explore major current issues in development economics with a special emphasis on how they relate to Sub-Saharan Africa. We will analyze several types of explanations for the lack of economic growth in the region: macroeconomic (e.g. growth determinants, the role of foreign aid), microeconomic (e.g. health, human capital, poverty dynamics), and institutional explanations. Understanding these questions will help us better understand and evaluate economic policy-making in the region.

We will work together towards achieving several key goals. By the end of the semester, the hope is that you will

- be able to apply the tools of economic analysis (both theoretical and empirical tools) to evaluate specific policy proposals, especially as they relate to contemporary issues in African development;
- have improved your confidence in interpreting and explaining statistical results;
- understand how to use (and how not to use!) empirical evidence to evaluate an economic argument;
- be able to communicate effectively in written and graphical form about issues in African development (as well as broader economic policy debates);
- be able to complete high quality group projects, including demonstration of effective project management and teamwork.

## How do I succeed in this course?

To succeed in this course, read the assigned material carefully. Complete required readings before class, and skim the recommended readings. Complete quizzes and discussions in a timely manner. Watch the assigned videos. Go over your class notes regularly, and fill in areas of confusion by going back to the lecture notes, the readings, or office hour consultations. Don't refer to the readings when completing quizzes (you *are* allowed to look at the readings, but you will learn better if you force yourself to instead recall the material!).

If any aspects of the course prevent you from learning, or if you feel excluded from learning in any way, please let me know as soon as possible! Together, we can develop strategies to meet both your needs and the course requirements.

## Course information

### Prerequisites

At least one intro Economics or AAE course.

### Canvas

I am designing this course in Canvas. The course page can be found at the top of the syllabus. My goal is to manage our assignments, quizzes, readings, and projects online. The Canvas schedule will link to topic pages, which will outline what you are expected to read / listen to / complete before coming to class. I will post course announcements through Canvas. Please check all your Canvas settings to ensure you receive my notifications.

**Do you have general questions about the course?** Please post them in the [Course questions or other issues discussion](#) on Canvas. Others might have the same question, and this way we save everyone extra emails! If you have individual-specific emails, you can of course address them to me by email or in person.

### Textbook

The main text for this course is [Essentials of Development Economics](#) (by Edward Taylor and Travis Lybbert; TL in the reading list). Other course readings include briefs, news articles, and research papers. I will post these readings on Canvas.

### Classroom conduct

**Technology use:** Learning requires attention and focus. When students use technologies (phones, laptops, tablets) during class, they often disrupt the instructor and their fellow students.<sup>1</sup> The best available evidence shows that personal technological aids lead to poor performance in courses and negative externalities for other students ability to learn. This Brookings report, [“For better learning in college lectures, lay down the laptop and pick up a pen”](#) details the compelling evidence and links to detailed research papers. Therefore, this course has a strict ban on personal technology. This includes cell phones, laptop computers, and tablets.

**Exemption policy:** Any student may petition for an exemption to the technology ban by emailing the instructor by the end of the second week of the semester (September 14, 2018). To prevent negative externalities due to technology use, I expect students with exemptions to use the technology as inconspicuously as possible if granted an exemption.

**Disruptive behavior policy:** The first offense will result in a verbal warning in class. The second offense will result in being dismissed from the class for that day, and may carry with it a formal reprimand via email. The third offense will result in disenrollment from the course for repeated disruptive behavior.

### Course credits

This course will be face-to-face, and we will interact both in class and outside of class via office hours and consultations on team projects. We will meet for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester. The course carries the expectation that you will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, team work, etc.) for about 3 hours out of the classroom for every class period. Below I describe in detail the meeting times and the expectations for student work.

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<sup>1</sup>This is per the UW’s definition of [disruption of university-authorized activities](#), described as follows: “Conduct that obstructs or impairs university–run or university–authorized activities, or that interferes with or impedes the ability of a person to participate in university–run or university–authorized activities.”

## Assessment & grading

Several assessment components are designed to help you reach the goals listed above:

### 1) Discussions and class participation (10% of course grade)

Class sessions will mix lectures, discussion, case studies and problem solving to explore the themes of course. I expect you to actively participate in class and to diligently complete assigned exercises and readings. Class discussions will only be productive if you all do the assigned readings prior to class, show up, and participate in the discussions. The educational literature also makes it very clear that “retrieval practice” (the act of repeatedly practicing retrieving information) is crucial for learning. Therefore, the more you prepare for class and practice retrieving the information you already digested through readings and lectures, the more you will learn!

I also recognize that not everyone is equally comfortable speaking in class. You can therefore boost your participation by actively engaging in (required) online discussions. I will compute the final participation grade based on both in-class and online participation. You can get an excellent participation grade through excellent online discussion participation and class attendance. I will drop the lowest graded online discussion score.

**I expect there to be around 6 online discussions. They will typically be due by 5 a.m. the day of class.**

Note on readings: Some of the readings might be challenging, as they occasionally make use of math or economic theory that you might not be 100% comfortable with. I encourage you to persevere. In your professional lives, you are likely to encounter papers and reports outside your comfort zone and you will be forced to extract information from them. I won't expect you to understand all of the mathematical details; strive instead to grasp the gist of the arguments presented.

### Online quizzes (10% of course grade)

I will post frequent online quizzes for you to respond to before class (and sometimes after class). There will be around 10 quizzes, so please think of them as low-stakes opportunities to test your own understanding. I will drop the lowest two quiz scores. The pages linked through our [Canvas schedule](#) will clearly state what to complete and when. These quizzes will include map questions to help you learn the geography of the region. Fun with maps!

### Problem sets (15% of course grade)

We will have four substantial homework assignments. My hope is that these will help you apply the course material in new and engaging ways. I will post the assignments on Canvas and expect your submissions there too. Some homework questions will require you to use Stata, so please download the software from the [UW-Madison Software library](#) well in advance of the assignments. Stata should also be installed on most campus computers. If you have any issues accessing the software, please let me know early on in the semester!

These problem sets are quite involved, so get started on them early!

### Midterm exam (30% of course grade)

An in-class midterm exam on October 31 will give you a chance to show me what you have learned so far.

## Development project (35% of course grade)

In an attempt to place a greater focus on the kinds of tools that we expect you to need upon graduation, we will replace the traditional final exam with a team project. The project will allow you to apply your knowledge towards the design of a small-scale development project in an African country. You will work in teams to research issues faced by African countries. You will then identify a specific problem in a specific locale and create a detailed, feasible plan to alleviate the problem. Your plans will detail five key components: justification, implementation, budget, funding and evaluation.

At the end of the semester, you will hand in a final paper (details to follow), and deliver a 10-minute class presentation/pitch. You should imagine that you are presenting your proposal to a grant agency. The class will vote to select the three most compelling pitches.

To build up towards a successful project, we have several milestones along the way. These assignments are there to keep you on track with your project, and to give me a chance to provide feedback:

1. **Project report 1** (2-3 page project proposal): due on September 26.
2. **Check-in:** schedule a meeting with the instructor during week of October 1 to discuss your proposal.
3. **Project report 2:** revise and start fleshing out your project proposal. Submit a 5-page, expanded proposal. Due October 22.
4. **Peer feedback:** You will peer feedback by 2 peers on your project proposal. (You will also conduct anonymous peer review of 2 other projects). The peer reviews are due October 26.
5. **Revision:** you will then revise your project proposal based on the feedback. Re-submit the revised proposal online, including a detailed description of how you responded to peer reviews. Due on November 14. This should start to look quite a lot like a first draft of the whole project.
6. **Project consultations:** I will meet with each team on November 21 (but we can also schedule for the 19th or 20th).
7. **First draft:** due December 4.
8. **Peer feedback:** You will receive feedback by 2 peers on your first draft. (You will also conduct anonymous peer review of 2 other projects). The peer reviews are due December 7.
9. **Presentations:** your team will present (ca. 10 minute presentation) on December 10 and 12.
10. **Revision:** you will submit a revised report, responding to peer feedback as well as comments during the presentation. Due on December 19, including a clear explanation of revisions in response to feedback from the first draft.
11. **Peer feedback:** I will ask each team member to evaluate the effort and contributions of other team members. I will consider the responses in assigning individual grades. I hope to not have to take them into account, but I want to ensure that team members are protected against free riding! The peer evaluation will also be due on December 19. However, if your team has issues with one of its members, please feel free to come to me for advice before it gets serious!

All course materials and submissions will be due electronically in PDF format on Canvas. Please name files according to this convention:

- Assignment\_FirstName\_LastName (for individual work)
- Assignment\_ProjectName (for group projects)

## Academic integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. I will forward substantial or repeated cases of misconduct to the Dean of Students Office for additional review. For more information, or if you have any doubts about how the above terms are defined, please refer to <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>.

The UW Writing Center has a [handout](#) on acknowledging, paraphrasing and quoting sources. Many borderline plagiarism cases could have been avoided if the students had a clearer sense of the rules of how to cite sources.

## Diversity and inclusion

I wholeheartedly endorse the UW-Madison statement on diversity. Diversity in all its flavors constitutes a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for the university and for the country. I value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich our community.

## Religious observances

If a religious observance will require that you miss class time, please notify me within the first two weeks of class of the specific days or dates on which you request relief. If the date you will miss is an exam, we will schedule a make-up exam time either before or after the regularly scheduled exam.

## Schedule/overview

Our Canvas site (<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/103383/pages/schedule>) outlines the topics that we will cover. Each topic links (or will link) to a topic page. This page in turn lists the preparatory work to complete before class (and in some cases work to complete after class). I also detail the readings below (but a few may be subject to change).

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## Detailed schedule of readings

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### **September 5 & September 10**

Introduction: Patterns of global and African development

- TL, Chapter 1 “What is Development Economics all about?”
- “Why Africa’s Development Model Puzzles Economists.” August 17, 2017. [[Link](#)]
- “Africa’s Pulse, Spring 2018: Analysis of Issues Shaping Africa’s Economic Future.” 2018. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. p. 5-23

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### **September 12 & September 17**

Economic growth – capital accumulation

- TL chapter 7 “Growth”
- Fosu, Augustin Kwasi, and Eric Kehinde Ogunleye. 2015. “African Growth Strategies.” The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics.
- Easterly, William. 2002. “The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists’ Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics.” MIT press. Chapter 3.
- Primer on how to read a regression table

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### **September 19 & 24**

Geography, demography, and institutions

- TL, Chapter 8 “Institutions”
- Bloom, David E. and Jeffrey D. Sachs. 1998. “Geography, Demography, and Economic Growth in Africa.” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 1998 (2): 207–295.

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### **September 26 & October 1**

The role of agriculture in economic growth

*Notes for September 26:* Class will be a guest lecture by Professor Foltz. I will not hold office hours on September 26.

- TL, Chapter 9 “Agriculture”
- Gollin, D. 2015. “Agriculture as an Engine of Growth and Poverty Reduction: Lessons for Africa” in A. McKay and E. Thorbecke eds. *Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa: Current and Emerging Issues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- World Bank Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. p. 1-45.

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**October 3 & 8**

Transforming African agriculture

- Dercon, Stefan, and Douglas Gollin. 2014. "Agriculture in African Development: Theories and Strategies." *Annu. Rev. Resour. Econ.* 6 (1): 471–492.
- Magruder, Jeremy R. 2018. "An Assessment of Experimental Evidence on Agricultural Technology Adoption in Developing Countries." *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 10, no. 1.

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**October 10 & 15**

Economic and climate shocks in rural households

- TL, Chapter 12 "Credit and Insurance"
- Udry, Christopher. 1990. "Credit Markets in Northern Nigeria: Credit as Insurance in a Rural Economy." *The World Bank Economic Review* 4, no. 3: 251–269.
- Fisman, Ray, and Edward Miguel. *Economic Gangsters: Corruption, Violence, and the Poverty of Nations*. Princeton University Press, 2010. Chapters 5 & 6

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**October 17**

Land conservation classroom game

- TBD

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**October 22**

Poverty and inequality

- TL, Chapter 4 "Poverty"
- TL, Chapter 5 "Inequality"
- Banerjee, Abhijit V., and Esther Duflo. 2007. "The Economic Lives of the Poor." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, no. 1: 141–68.

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**October 24 & 29**

Going beyond income

- Clemens, Michael A., Charles J. Kenny, and Todd J. Moss. 2007. "The Trouble with the MDGs: Confronting Expectations of Aid and Development Success." *World Development* 35, no. 5: 735–51.
- Jean, Neal, Marshall Burke, Michael Xie, W. Matthew Davis, David B. Lobell, and Stefano Ermon. 2016. "Combining Satellite Imagery and Machine Learning to Predict Poverty." *Science* 353, no. 6301: 790–94.

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**October 31**

Midterm

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**November 5 & 7**

Health

- TL, Chapter 6 “Human Development”
- Bleakley, Hoyt. 2010. “Health, Human Capital, and Development.” *Annual Review of Economics* 2, no. 1: 283–310.
- Burke, Marshall, Erick Gong, and Kelly Jones. 2015. “Income Shocks and HIV in Africa.” *The Economic Journal* 125, no. 585: 1157–89.

### **November 12 & 14**

Investing in human capital

- Edmonds, Eric V., and Nina Pavcnik. 2005. “Child Labor in the Global Economy.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 1: 199–220.
- Lucas, Adrienne M., and Isaac M. Mbiti. 2014. “Effects of School Quality on Student Achievement: Discontinuity Evidence from Kenya.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 6, no. 3: 234–63.

### **November 19**

Aid or no Aid?

- Qian, Nancy. 2015. “Making Progress on Foreign Aid.” *Annual Review of Economics* 7, no. 1: 277–308.

### **November 21**

Project consultations

### **November 26 & 28**

Public goods and corruption

- Burgess, Robin, Remi Jedwab, Edward Miguel, Ameet Morjaria, and Gerard Padró i Miquel. 2015. “The Value of Democracy: Evidence from Road Building in Kenya.” *American Economic Review* 105, no. 6: 1817–51.
- Reinikka, Ritva, and Jakob Svensson. 2004. “Local Capture: Evidence from a Central Government Transfer Program in Uganda.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119, no. 2: 679–705.

### **December 3 & 5**

Current successes & future challenges

- Aker, Jenny C. 2010. “Information from Markets Near and Far: Mobile Phones and Agricultural Markets in Niger.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 2, no. 3: 46–59.
- Coulibaly, Brahim. 2017. “In Defense of the ‘Africa Rising’ Narrative.” *Brookings (blog)*. <https://www.brookings.edu/in-focus/2017/06/27/in-defense-of-the-africa-rising-narrative/>

### **December 10 & 12**

Presentations