

Welcome to AAE 477

Agricultural & Economic Development of Africa | Fall 2019

Syllabus

Class details	Instructor details
Meeting time: TR 1-2:15	Instructor: Dr. Tjernström
Meeting location: NUTRI SCI 290	Office: Taylor Hall 520
Office hours: Mondays 9:30-11:30	Email: tjernstroem@wisc.edu
Course website	Instructor website

Official course description

Composition, organization, and techniques of agricultural production; economic change and development of agriculture, economic policies, special problems of developing African agriculture.

Official pre-requisites:

AAE 215, ECON 101, or 111, or graduate/professional standing.

This version: September 9, 2019

Introduction

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.

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Course objectives

During the semester 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)

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Details

Course requirements and grades

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.

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.

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File naming convention

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)

Assessment

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

I) Class participation (10% of course grade)

See more 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 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!

Part of this assessment will include low-stakes in-class pop quizzes.

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.

II) Map quiz (5% of your grade)

See more We will have an in-class map quiz to test your knowledge of the geography of the region. This quiz will test both your ability to place African countries on a map and your knowledge of other key geographical features. You will have seen the geographical features in the online quizzes.

III) Homeworks (20% of your grade)

See more We will have four substantial homework assignments. My hope is that these will help you apply the course material in new and engaging ways. These problem sets are quite involved, so get started on them early!

IV) Midterm exam (30% of course grade)

See more An in-class midterm exam on October 24 will give you a chance to show me what you have learned so far. It will be part essay-based and part multiple-choice questions. I will give you a list of the essay questions in advance so that you can prepare. **For the midterm, you can bring your notes with you to the exam.**

V) Final exam (35% of your grade)

See more A cumulative final exam on December 18 between 5:05p.m. - 7:05p.m. will cover all the material in the course. It will be part essay-based and part multiple-choice questions. I will give you a list of the essay questions in advance so that you can prepare. **You will not be allowed to bring your notes in for the final exam.**

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Values

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.

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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 [this](#).

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.

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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.

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Electronics

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. 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, our course will have 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

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.

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Schedule

Day	Date	Topic	Assignments
Tue	9/10/19	Introduction	
Thu	9/12/19	Patterns of global & African development	
Tue	9/17/19	Economic growth – why do we care?	
Thu	9/19/19	Economic growth – how do we model it?	
Tue	9/24/19	Economic growth – what factors influence growth?	
Thu	9/26/19	Geography, demography, and institutions	
Tue	10/1/19	Geography, demography, and institutions	Growth homework due
Thu	10/3/19	The role of agriculture in growth	
Tue	10/8/19	The role of agriculture in growth – what makes agricultural households different?	
Thu	10/10/19	The role of agriculture in growth – agricultural policy impacts	Narrated country presentation due
Tue	10/15/19	Transforming African agriculture	
Thu	10/17/19	Economic & climate shocks in rural households	

Tue	10/22/19	Catch-up class + review	
Thu	10/24/19	Midterm exam	Study!
Tue	10/29/19	Poverty & inequality	
Thu	10/31/19	Poverty & inequality + Excel	
Tue	11/5/19	Health & human capital	
Thu	11/7/19	Health & human capital	Inequality homework due
Tue	11/12/19	Health & human capital	
Thu	11/14/19	Foreign aid & food aid	
Tue	11/19/19	Foreign aid & food aid	Map quiz in class
Thu	11/21/19	Public goods & corruption	
Tue	11/26/19	Corruption classroom game	
Thu	11/28/19	Thanksgiving - no class	
Tue	12/3/19	Public goods & corruption	Homework 4 due
Thu	12/5/19	The economics of internet & new technologies	
Tue	12/10/19	Africa – hopeful or hopeless? (+ exam review)	
Wed	12/18/19	Final exam	Study!

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Slides

I will try to post slides ahead of time and will always upload slides with my notes after class. They will be posted [here](#).

Detailed schedule of readings

September 10-12, 2019

Topic: Patterns of global and African development **Readings & exercises:** * TL, Chapter 1 “What is Development Economics all about?” * “Why Africa’s Development Model Puzzles Economists.” August 17, 2017. [Link](#)

September 17-24, 2019

Topic: Economic growth – why do we care & how do we model it? **Readings & exercises:** * 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. > All the chapters in the book are worth reading! > It is a pretty great book; I posted a pdf version of the full book [here](#) for anyone who is interested.

Bill Easterly is a very interesting figure. If you are interested in learning more about his opinions, [this WSJ article](#) is great.

September 26 - October 1

Topic: Geography, demography, and institutions **Readings & exercises:** * 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. > Note: Bloom is a long paper. Focus on pages 207-240; the comments at the end are interesting but entirely optional. > Reading questions to keep in mind: > * How would you summarize the authors’ main argument? > * According to Bloom and Sachs, what factor or factors have made it difficult for Africa to break out of its poverty trap?

October 3 - 10

Topic: The role of agriculture in economic growth **Readings & exercises:** * TL, Chapter 9 “Agriculture” * World Bank Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. p. 1-45. * *Optional:* 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.

October 15

Topic: Transforming African agriculture **Readings & exercises:** * 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.

October 17

Topic: Economic & climate shocks in rural households **Readings & exercises:** * 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.

October 22

Topic: Catch-up class + review

October 24

Topic: Midterm exam

- 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 29 - 31

Topic: Poverty and inequality **Readings & exercises:** * 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.

November 5 - 12

Topic: Health and human capital **Readings & exercises:** * TL, Chapter 6 “Human Development” *Health* * 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. *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 14 - 19

Topic: Foreign aid & food aid **Readings & exercises:** * Qian, Nancy. 2015. “Making Progress on Foreign Aid.” *Annual Review of Economics* 7, no. 1: 277–308.

November 21 - December 3

Topic: Public goods and corruption **Readings & exercises:** * 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 5 - 10

Topic: ICTs, new technology **Readings & exercises:** * 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/blog/africa-in-focus/2017/06/27/in-defense-of-the-africa-rising-narrative/>

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