University of Maryland – College Park
Master of Science Program in Applied Economics
Washington, DC location: 1400 16th Street, NW, suite 140

ECON 676: Economic Development
Spring 2021

Updated 3/11/21

Instructors:

Sylvan Herskowitz (sylvan@umd.edu)
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Office hours: 6pm, before that day's lecture, on Zoom.

Teaching Assistant:

Jake Kramer: (kramerj@umd.edu)
Office hours: 5:15-6pm Thursdays

Class Meets: Wednesdays, Session 1: 6:45-7:30pm and Session 2: 7:45pm-8:30pm. These will be synchronous meetings with some lecture, but a primary focus on discussion. Pre-recorded materials will also be prepared, posted on ELMS, and should be reviewed prior to class.

Notes:
- There will be no class on March 17th for spring break.
- Schedule of make up date: We will need to make up this missing class and will select a time for this make up class during the first class meeting.

Prerequisites: ECON641, ECON642; and must have completed or be concurrently enrolled in ECON645

Course Description: The class will use economic theory and empirical evidence to understand important questions in the field of development economics. Each meeting of the class is designed to be self-contained, but some broad topics within the field will be considered in more than one of the meetings. The topics include: poverty, inequality and growth; agricultural markets; finances (credit, saving, insurance); and the development of human capital (i.e., health and education). Course readings will include textbooks, policy pieces, and academic articles.

Course Objectives:

Our program has 7 general learning outcomes for students:
1. Ability to understand, evaluate and analyze economic data
2. Ability to understand and interpret statistical evidence from economic data
3. Ability to apply empirical evidence to assessing economic arguments
4. Ability to apply macroeconomic theories to policy discussions
5. Ability to apply microeconomic theories to policy discussions
6. Ability to communicate economic ideas to a broader audience
7. Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of policy programs using sound economic techniques

The learning outcomes that pertain to this course are: *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.*

Students will develop their skills in theoretical and empirical analysis. They will apply these skills to questions related to development economics. They will be required to present their work verbally (in writing as well as presentations), mathematically, and empirically based on appropriate econometric analysis of data.

Textbooks and Readings:

Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo. *Poor Economics.* Public Affairs. 2011.
Schaffner, Julie, *Development Economics, Theory, and Policy Analysis.* Wiley. 2013

We used a textbook last year but didn't end up using it enough to justify making all of you buy it this year, therefore the Schaffner book and readings are optional for those who would prefer a textbook style presentation of some of the material. We are going to focus on journal articles and the Banerjee and Duflo book for a broader lens and introduction thematic areas.

Supplementary readings will be assigned to allow for deeper discussions on actual academic research projects and are also required. Supplementary readings for the first class are listed in the course schedule, below. Readings for later classes will be announced in class and posted on the course's ELMS website at least one week in advance.

Class discussions will cover the readings. You are responsible for checking the ELMS website for required readings each week to prepare for each class's lecture and complete any pre-class assignment.

Course Outline, Due Dates and Readings: (Schedule changes, if any, will be posted in "announcements" on ELMS.)

Please still see the separate reading document for assigned readings. However, below are the broad course topics and the scheduled day of the class session:

3/3 **Class 1:** Introduction, Growth, Measurement, and Inequality
3/10 **Class 2:** Statistics review/causality and Credit
[Spring Break]
3/24 **Class 3:** Savings and Insurance
3/25 **Class 4:** Cash and in-kind transfers
3/28 **Assignment #1 Due**
3/31 **Class 5:** Social Protection, Behavior, and Environment
4/7 **Class 6:** Agriculture; technology adoption
4/10 **Assignment #2 Due**
4/14 **Class 7:** Health
4/21 **Class 8:** Nutrition; Intra-household resource allocation
4/24 **Assignment #3 Due**
4/28 **Class 9:** Education
5/5 **Class 10:** Labor; microenterprises
5/12 **Class 11:** Gender, fertility, and the marriage market
5/14 **Written Proposal Due**
5/16 **Presentation Videos Due**
5/19 **Class 12:** In class presentations of final projects

Statistical Software: Stata (version 13 or above)

Course Website: Copies of the course syllabus, your grades, and other relevant links and documents will be posted on the course's ELMS/Canvas website. You can access the site via www.elms.umd.edu. You will need to use your University of Maryland "directory ID" and password.

Email: The University has adopted email as the primary means of communication outside the classroom, and I will use it to inform you of important announcements. Students are responsible for updating their current email address via http://www.registrar.umd.edu/current/ (Under the first major heading of "Online Transactions" there is a link to "Update Contact Information".) Failure to check email, errors in forwarding email, and returned email due to "mailbox full" or "user unknown" will not excuse a student from missing announcements or deadlines. We will do our best to respond to email within 36 hours. *Please address all email communications to both instructors.*

Grading:

1) Online discussions (5% of course grade)

We will open online discussion every week by midnight on the day after class. We will begin one or more threads of the discussion with questions that follow from things that came up during class. The discussions will remain open through Sunday (~96 hours). Students must post at least two – and no more than three – contribution(s) to an online discussion each week. We will check in to respond to what has been posted and to redirect the discussion as necessary. The online discussions will be graded according to a rubric that will be posted on the course website. We prefer for students to make an initial contribution in the first 24 or 36 hours, but we recognize that there may be non-class related constraints that keep people from always meeting that deadline. That said, please do your best to complete your first post within the first 36 hours. Each student must also make at least one response to something someone else has posted.

2) Data exercises (5% of course grade)

We will have ~5 brief data exercises during the course of the class. Likely, these will be assigned in the first half of the course to make sure that you all have some of the basic Stata skills that you need in order to do your research project/proposal (details below). They will be posted on ELMS and should be done before class. We ask that you upload your log files BEFORE the class that they are due as we will take a few minutes during class to go over solutions.

3) Three assignments (30% of course grade)

Two main components of each assignment: 1) Empirical exercises, and 2) Portion of research proposal.

There will be three assignments and they will be weighted equally in determining a final grade. Each assignment may have a combination of short response questions, instructions to conduct and interpret empirical analyses, and exercises linked to your semester-long research proposal.

The empirical sections of the assignments will require you to work with actual data. Students are assumed to have a working knowledge of Stata, and will be responsible for writing the appropriate code, as well as properly interpreting the Stata output. Students may discuss the assignment questions with each other, but they should not copy each other's work. Each student must turn it his or her own individual answers to

the assignments. If the graders notice that two or more students have (nearly) identical answers, all the students involved will receive grades of zero for those problems.

All assignments must be submitted on-line on ELMS. These should either be in Microsoft word or PDF format (the course TA will give further instruction on their preference). Assignments submitted after the due date/time or that are unreadable to the grader will receive a grade of zero.

4) One recorded presentation of a course reading (10% of course grade)

Each student will record a brief (10 min) summary of an assigned journal reading. Students will choose the dates of their presentations during the first-class session and will be provided with a template to follow for their presentations. Along with these videos, students must email two suggestions for discussion questions that follow from the paper. These suggestions should be emailed to the instructors before Saturday (midnight) before the class. In class we will also have a few minutes of live discussion about these papers where the instructors may ask the presenter follow-up questions about the paper. Don't worry, this is not an oral exam, we just want to stimulate some discussion and make sure that main points or subtleties are highlighted for these papers.

These videos must be posted by the end of Saturday (midnight) before the class session of your presentation so that everyone has time to watch them and participate in the discussion on ELMS.

Pre-recording these presentations is actually extremely easy. We **strongly** encourage you to follow the template posted on ELMS. You may adapt or expand as you like, BUT full points can be received by following this template as is. Points will be deducted for videos that go beyond ten minutes.

Using the template, on each slide go to "Insert" on the top banner. Click "audio" then "record audio". Record what you want to say about the slide. Tell us what's interesting about the table you are showing etc. When it's done you'll see a small speaker image. Drag it to the top right corner so its out of the way but easy to find. Ask if you have questions or difficulties.

5) Final report (35% of course grade)
6) Presentation of final project (15% of course grade)

Students will be required to complete an empirical policy-relevant report during the semester and make a 10-15 minute presentation during the last class. The report should be written individually, based on a topic selected by the student(s), with the instructor(s) pre-approval. The report should answer a policy-relevant question. It should include a brief literature review of academic articles on similar topics, motivation (with descriptive statistics) of the issue in the proposal along with analysis of existing data, a discussion of this analysis along with an acknowledgment of empirical limitations, a proposed improved approach to answering the research question, and a discussion of plausible outcomes and mechanisms. Each report should be roughly 3,000 words. We will provide more detailed guidelines later.

Students will develop this report continuously throughout the semester as part of the problem sets and therefore receive feedback from the instructors on their progress towards the final report and presentations.

Final Course Grades

Students' grades on each component of the course will be weighed according to the scale above to calculate their numerical course grade. The numerical course grades will be translated into letter grades as follows:

- A 93-100
- A- 90-92
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 75-79
- C 70-74
- C- 60-69
- D+ 50-59
- D 40-49
- F 0-49

Standard Program and University of Maryland Polices

Contact Hours: Three credit master's-level courses at the University of Maryland require a minimum amount of contact between instructors and students. Our courses' 12 weekly meetings only satisfy 80% of the university's contact requirement. The other 20% is satisfied by weekly mandatory and graded online contact. In principle, the contact hours requirement could be satisfied by scheduling 3 additional 150-minute meetings per term, or 6 additional 75-minute meetings, or 10 additional 45-minute meetings. But in practice the contact hours requirement is satisfied by the weekly online discussions. The weekly online discussions are a more flexible way to ensure that our program's courses in DC provide the same level of student-instructor contact as the traditional 15-week face-to-face version of the same course when it is taught on campus in College Park.

Work Load: Mastering the material covered in this course requires a significant amount of work outside of class. Students should expect to spend more time outside of class than in class – typically at least twice as much time. The courses in our DC program are 12-week courses that cover all the same material as a traditional semester-long 3-credit course (15 weeks). The compressed schedule makes it possible to complete our degree in just 15 months if you take 2 courses each term. But the compressed schedule also implies an accelerated pace with an average of 25% more work per week in a given course (15/12 = 1.25). The normal full-time load in a master's program is 3 courses per semester, or 6 courses per year. The weekly work load when taking 2 of our DC courses per term is equivalent to the load from 2.5 "normal" 15-week courses - so 2.5/3.0=83% of a full-time load. Students who take 2 courses per quarter in our program complete 8 courses per year. So over the course of a year, taking 2 courses per quarter in our DC program is equivalent to 133% of a full-time load (8/6 = 1.33).

Academic Integrity: The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity. You should inform yourself about the UMD policies related to academic misconduct:

https://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/home/current-students

Cases of academic misconduct, including plagiarism and giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on exams, will be referred to the UMD Office of Student Conduct. If found responsible for academic misconduct, students can be subject to sanctions. The standard sanction for graduate students found responsible for cheating on exams is expulsion from the university.

Student Conduct: Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility to one another or myself will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

Excused Absences: The University of Maryland's policy on excused absences is posted here: http://www.president.umd.edu/administration/policies/section-v-student-affairs/v-100g

Please note:

If you miss any class meetings for any reason, you are still responsible for all material covered during the meeting you missed. It is your responsibility – not the instructor's – to get yourself caught up in the course. Instructors routinely facilitate things by posting lecture notes, etc.

If you need to miss an exam or other graded course requirement because of illness, injury, or some other emergency: Follow doctor's orders and get documentation. Get in touch with the instructor as soon as you're able – preferably prior to missing the exam or deadline. Communicate with the instructor to make up the course requirement as soon as possible. You are entitled to recover before you make up the course requirement, but you are not entitled to extra days to study beyond the time the doctor's note says you're incapacitated. If you are incapacitated for more than a week or so beyond the end of the term, your grade in the course will be an "Incomplete". In such cases you must negotiate a plan with your instructor for completing the course requirements. Once you make up the course requirement the instructor will change your "I" to the appropriate letter grade.

School Closings and Delays: Information regarding official University closing and delays can be found on the campus website and the snow phone line: (301) 405-SNOW (405-7669). Since our program is an evening program in downtown Washington, DC, rather than a day program in College Park, we do not always cancel classes on the same days as the College Park campus. The program director will always announce cancellation information to the program as an announcement on the program's ELMS/Canvas site. This will generally be done by 1:00 p.m. on days when weather or other factors are an issue.

UMD Counseling Center: Sometimes students experience academic, personal and/or emotional distress. The UMD Counseling Center in Shoemaker Hall provides comprehensive support services that promote personal, social, and academic success. The cost of these services is covered by the fees you already paid when you registered for classes, and there is no additional charge if you use the services. Proactively explore the range of services available, including the Counseling Service, Accessibility and Disability Service, Learning Assistance Service, and the Testing Office, all described at http://www.counseling.umd.edu/

Students with Disabilities: The University of Maryland does not discriminate based on differences in age, race, ethnicity, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, class, political affiliation, or national origin. Reasonable accommodations will be arranged for students with documented disabilities. Students who have an accommodations letter from the Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) should meet with me during the first week of the term to discuss and plan for the implementation of your accommodations. If you require reasonable accommodations but have not yet registered with ADS, please contact the Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682 or adsfrontdesk@umd.edu.

Academic Progress: The UMD Graduate School requires that students maintain a GPA of at least 3.0. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation by the graduate school. Students on academic probation must ask the program's director to petition the graduate school if they want to remain enrolled in the program. The petition must include a plan for getting the student's GPA up to at least 3.0. Students who do not live up to their plan can have their enrollment in the program

terminated without having earned the degree. Note: a grade of "B" corresponds to a GPA of 3.0. A grade of "B-" corresponds to a GPA of 2.7.

Building Access: The door to the building at 1400 16th Street is unlocked on weekdays until 7:00 PM. Students who arrive after 7:00 PM or on weekends will find the door locked. The building's concierge station has been moved in the recent lobby renovation, so the concierge can no longer easily see when someone is at the door. You can call the phone on the security guard's desk by dialing (202) 328-5158. If the security guard is off duty or happens to be away from his or her desk when you arrive, you can always also go around to the other door at 1616 P Street and pick up the black phone to the right of that door. You will be connected to the company that handles security for our building. If you tell them you're with the University of Maryland (suite 140 in 1400 16th Street), they should ask you for a password. When you tell them the password, they will buzz you in. You can get the password from the program coordinator, the TAs, or the program director. Please note: the building security staff are not able to buzz you in at the 1400 16th Street door. You have to go around to the 1616 P Street door to be buzzed in.