

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND - COLLEGE PARK  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
M.S. IN APPLIED ECONOMICS PROGRAM

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ECON 676 Spring 2024  
Credit Hours: 3  
W 6:45 PM - 9:30 PM  
Location: 1400 16th St, NW, suite 140, Washington, DC

Amanda Kerr  
Email: [ACKerr@umd.edu](mailto:ACKerr@umd.edu)  
(Office hours: W 5:30 - 6:30 pm)  
TA: Jacqueline Nguyen  
(Office hours: Tu 5:30 - 6:30 pm)  
TA Email: [tbnguyen@umd.edu](mailto:tbnguyen@umd.edu)

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## OVERVIEW

Why are some countries poor and others not? Why are some people poor and others not? What improves the wellbeing of individuals and families who are poor, and how do we know? In this course, we will study these questions, which define the subfield of development economics.

Students will draw on skills that they have acquired throughout their previous coursework. During the course of the semester students will develop an original contribution to the existing body of economic knowledge.

Prerequisites: ECON 641, ECON 642, and must have completed, or be currently enrolled in, ECON 645.

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## OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The 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 ECON 676 are outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7.

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## COURSE WEBSITE

Copies of the course syllabus, grades, and other relevant links and documents will be posted on the course's ELMS/Canvas website. You can access the site via [this link](#). You will need to use your University of Maryland "directory ID" and password.

## EMAIL

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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. The University creates an “@umd.edu” email address for every graduate student. All official UMD communications will be sent to students at their “@umd.edu” email address. You are responsible for reading your @umd.edu email address, including ELMS/Canvas Announcements I send to the class. You should make sure ELMS/Canvas Announcements and messages are forwarded to an email address that you check regularly. Failure to check email, errors in forwarding email, and returned email will not excuse a student from missing announcements or deadlines.

I will do my best to respond to email within 36 hours. I prefer that you contact me via email to ACKerr@umd.edu, rather than through the ELMS/Canvas messaging system, though I will reply to either kind of message.

## OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATION

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My office hours are Wednesdays from 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm. TA’s office hours are Tuesdays from 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm. If you’d like to meet virtually, you must email me ahead of time and I will send a zoom link to connect. You should feel free to email me if you have any questions or would like to set up an appointment outside my office hours - I realize the times I have chosen may not work for all of you and I am happy to meet at other times or on other days. Please include “ECON 676” somewhere in the subject of all emails to help me prioritize a response to you.

## READINGS

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### Books:

*Poor Economics* by Abhijit Banerjee and Ester Duflo

*The Great Escape* by Angus Deaton

*Development as Freedom* by Amartya Sen

*The White Man’s Burden* by William Easterly

### Journal Articles:

Banerjee, Abhijit V., and Esther Duflo (2007). “The Economic Lives of the Poor.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21(1): 141–68.

de Mel, Suresh, David McKenzie, and Christopher Woodruff (2008). “Returns to Capital in Microenterprises: Evidence from a Field Experiment.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(4): 1329 – 1372.

Deaton, Angus (2020). *Randomization in the Tropics, Revisited*.

Edmonds, Eric, V., and Nina Pavcnik (2005). “Child Labor in the Global Economy.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19(1): 199-220.

Gertler, Paul J. et al. (2016). *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Second Edition. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank.

Lee, Kenneth, Edward Miguel, and Catherine Wolfram (2020). “Does Household Electrification Supercharge Economic Development?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 34(1): 122-144.

Miguel, Edward and Michael Kremer (2004). “Worms: Identifying Impacts on Education and Health in the Presence of Treatment Externalities.” *Econometrica* 72(1): 159 – 217.

Schultz, T. Paul (2004). “School subsidies for the poor: evaluating the Mexican Progresa poverty program.” *Journal of Development Economics* 74(1): 199 – 250.

**Note:** This is not an exhaustive list. As research is constantly changing, additional articles may be added throughout the semester.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

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A large portion of your grade is contingent on participating in discussions and presentations (> 10%). While attendance is not explicitly graded, missing multiple classes will result in lower discussion scores.

When in class please be courteous, and avoid imposing costs to those around you; please silence your cell phones, do not browse the internet, find a seat quietly if you are late, etc. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain any missing information, notes, etc. from your classmates. If I am late to class, please wait 15 minutes before leaving.

## COURSEWORK

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Detailed descriptions for each portion of the course are available on ELMS.

### Discussions:

- Discussion leader (In-Person) (1x): 5%
- Discussion leader (Online) (1x): 5%
- Participant (In-Person) (12x): 10%
- Participant (Online) (6x): 5%

### Research Brief:

- First draft (1x): 10%
- Final draft (1x): 25%

### Referee Reports:

- First draft (2x): 10%

### Presentations:

- Proposal discussion (1x): 5%
- First draft presentation (1x): 10%
- Final draft presentation (1x): 15%

Deadlines for all assignments will be strictly enforced. **All assignments are due at 6:00 pm on the due date.** All assignments are graded on a 1-100 scale. I will deduct 1 point (up to 10) for every five minutes past the deadline that your assignment is late, and 10 points per day thereafter (e.g., if your assignment is turned in at 6:01 pm, you will lose 1 point; if it is turned in any time between 6:51 pm and 6:00 pm the following day, you will lose 20 points; etc.).

If you need a certain grade to maintain a GPA, the appropriate time to be concerned about this is from day one of the semester. I will not give extra credit or points at the end of the semester based on special requests.

I will commit to the following grading scale, but reserve the right to adjust the cutoff points downward depending on the actual distribution of scores (I may curve final grades up, I will not curve them down).

93 - 100	90 - 92	80 - 89	70 - 79	60 - 69	50 - 59	40 - 49	30 - 39	20 - 29	10 - 19	0 - 9
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F

**Re-grading:** Care is taken in grading, but there occasionally may be errors. For any disputes, you have one week (seven days) from the time the assignment or grade is returned to submit to me both the original assignment and a brief explanation of any part that you believe needs re-grading. I will regrade the entire assignment.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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Policies related to all graduate courses at the University of Maryland are posted on [this page](#) of the Graduate School's website.

Please familiarize yourself with these policies related academic integrity, non-discrimination policy, accessibility, absences and accommodations, grading, academic standing, grievance procedures, and other important policies.

### 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 discussion boards. 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.

### Workload

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, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards applicable to all undergraduate and graduate students, and you are responsible for upholding these standards as you complete assignments and take exams in this course. Please make yourself aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information visit [this site](#).

### 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.

### Academic Progress

The 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 director to petition the graduate school if they want to remain 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 be forced to leave the program 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.

### **Excused Absences**

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 to work with study partners, the teaching assistant, and the instructor to make sure you catch up on the missed material. 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've been 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). The program director will also 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. When classes need to be canceled during the semester, we make every effort to schedule makeup classes.

### **UMD Counseling Center**

Sometimes students experience academic, personal and/or emotional distress. The UMD Counseling Center in Shoemaker Hall provides comprehensive and confidential 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, and the Testing Office, all described [here](#).

### **Graduate Academic Counselor**

The UMD Graduate School also has an academic counselor available to support students who are having difficulty navigating mental health resources on campus, are considering a leave of absence and/or need assistance finding mental health care off campus. The Graduate Academic Counselor also facilitates bi-weekly Graduate Student Circle Sessions which provide an opportunity to learn about resources and connect with other graduate students. Students can learn more about the Graduate Academic Counselor by visiting [this site](#).

### **UMD Accessibility & Disability Service**

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several

weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact ADS as soon as possible so that they have sufficient time to make arrangements. For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at [adsfrontdesk@umd.edu](mailto:adsfrontdesk@umd.edu). Information about sharing your accommodation letter, discussing accommodation logistics and getting assistance from ADS staff and more can be found on the [ADS website](#).

### **Student 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](mailto:adsfrontdesk@umd.edu).

### **Course Evaluations**

Near the end of the term, you will receive an email inviting you to submit a voluntary and anonymous course evaluation. Your feedback on courses will be very helpful in improving the quality of instruction in our program.

### **Building Access**

There is a smartphone app that can be used to enter our building after normal business hours. The program coordinator will provide information about this. We will also provide information about the code for entering the front door of our suite. Please make sure you are receiving the ELMS-Announcements that we send out to the program about these and other important matters.

access to the back door of the building. There is keypad access to the door of Morrill 1102. The code will be shared with students by the program coordinator.

## GENERAL DISCLAIMER

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I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus at any point in time throughout the semester. Most likely, this will happen with respect to the reading assignments. Some material will take longer to go through and other material we will get through faster than I intended. The obvious way to be informed about changes is to attend class.

## TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

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Date	Topic	Readings	Due @ 6 pm
Feb. 28	Introduction	-	
Mar. 6	Measuring Wellbeing	Banerjee and Duflo “The Economic Lives Lives of the Poor;” Deaton Ch. 1; Banerjee and Duflo Ch. 1	
Mar. 8	Proposal discussions	-	
Mar. 13	Empirical Tools of Development	Gertler et. al. (2016) <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice</i> Ch. 4-7; Deaton (2020) “Randomization in the Tropics, Revisited”	
Mar. 27 Apr. 3	First draft presentations	-	
Apr. 10	Investment: Education/Health	Schultz (2004) “ School subsidies for the poor;” Lee et. al. (2020) “Does Household Electrification Supercharge Economic Development;” Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) “Child Labor in the Global Economy”	First draft
Apr. 17	Behavior change & Technology Adaption: Education/Health	Miguel and Kremer (2004) “Worms: Identifying Impacts on Education and Health in the Presence of Treatment Externalities;” Banerjee and Duflo Ch. 3-4	
Apr. 24	Economics of Lending	del Mel et. al. (2008) “Returns to Capital in Microenterprises;” Banerjee and Duflo Ch. 6-9	Peer Reviews
May 1 May 8	Final presentations	-	
May 15	Differing views on development	Deaton Ch. 7; Banerjee and Duflo Ch. 10; Sen Ch. 1; Easterly Ch. 1	Final draft