# **Economics 1082: Households, Firms, and Communities in Developing Countries**

# **Syllabus**

Spring 2018

#### **Administration:**

Instructor: Emily Breza
Teaching fellow: Patricia Sun
Emily Breza
ebreza@fas.harvard.edu
zsun@g.harvard.edu

o Lecture: Tuesday, Thursday 10:00-11:30 am, Sever 103

• Friday Review Section: TBA

• Instructor and TF office hours: TBA

# **Course Description:**

This course studies the problem of global poverty with a microeconomic approach and a focus on households, firms, and communities. We will explore common themes across developing countries ranging from intra-household bargaining and gender, to microfinance and entrepreneurship, to social learning in village networks. We will investigate the functioning of labor markets, credit markets, and government institutions along with strategies households and firms adopt for coping with limited resources and inefficient institutions. The course will rely heavily on microeconomic principals and econometric techniques and will cover applications from around the world. We will also cover rigorous methods to evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions.

# **Prerequisites:**

The course will be a mix of theory and empirics. Intermediate microeconomics is required for success in the course. We will use algebra in the theory portions of the lectures, problem sets and exams. For each topic, we will study several concrete examples chosen from around the world and use statistics to understand these examples quantitatively. A statistics or econometrics course is highly recommended. Econometrics is not a prerequisite for this class, but you will be expected to familiarize yourself with basic econometric methods on your own, and it would be helpful to be taking econometrics concurrently (if you have not taken it before). We will cover the relevant econometrics material in class and in the TF sections, but this coverage is often too quick for a first exposure to the material.

#### **Requirements:**

- O **Problem sets:** There will be about one problem set every 3 or 4 lectures (for a total of 6 problem sets), with each one due at least one week after it is handed out. Problem sets will contain empirical exercises, theory exercises, and written assignments developing a policy idea. In the first few Friday sections, you will learn how to use the statistical software, Stata, to complete these exercises. Problem sets for this class are very important, and somewhat time-consuming. You are allowed to discuss the problem sets with your peers, but each student is required to prepare and submit independently the write-up of the solutions.
- o **Presentations/workgroup:** Students will work in small groups to develop a program proposal that addresses a need or problem in a developing country.

Students must identify a problem, research the underlying causes, and come up with a program that may help address the problem. A plan for evaluating the impacts of that program is also required. Each group of students will give a presentation on **Friday**, **April 13**. This extra session of presentations will be in place of the regularly scheduled class on Thursday, March 8. If your group absolutely cannot attend the makeup session, you will be able to schedule your presentation for an alternate time in my office Littauer M28.

- Exams: This class has two equally weighted exams. There will be a final exam during exam week, and a mid-term exam on March 1st.
- o **Grading Policy:** Problem sets will count toward 40% of the final grade for the course. The mid-term will count for 25%. The presentation will count toward 10% of your final grade. The final exam will count for the remaining 25%. Class participation is expected, and will be taken into account in marginal cases (i.e. in the difficult decision between a B+ and an A-).

## Late Policy:

Assignments will be graded down by 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hours they are late. Exceptions will be made only for medical or personal emergencies, which must be certified by a doctor or a resident dean.

# **Changes to Regularly Scheduled Class Sessions:**

We will <u>not have class</u> on **Thursday, March 8**. Instead, we will <u>schedule a make-up class</u> for **Friday, April 13** during the regularly scheduled Friday TF section.

#### **Text and readings:**

The textbook for this class is Abhijit Banerjee's and Esther Duflo's *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the fight against global Poverty*. We will also refer to Debraj Ray's *Development Economics* for some material, although you are not required to buy it. Students find the Ray book to be a useful resource for understanding some of the theory covered in the first third of the course. However, we will also rely heavily on articles. Two general references for everything we will do, which you should read in the first couple of weeks and refer to regularly are: "Economic Lives of the Poor" (Banerjee and Duflo, 2007) and "What is Middle Class About the Middle Classes?" (Banerjee and Duflo, 2008)

You can access online articles for this class by browsing the links on the course Canvas website. There are many readings for this class. You are not expected to read every single article in detail, but you are expected to understand the methods used by the authors to reach their conclusions. Required readings are starred. Lecture notes will be posted on the Canvas page before each lecture. They are not a substitute for attending the class, but rather a study aide.

#### **Course Content**

- 1) 1/23, 1/25: Introduction: the vicious circle of poverty
  - a) \*Poor Economics: Foreword and Chapter 1
  - b) \*Theoretical model: Ray, pp. 272-279; Ray, pp. 489-504
- 2) 1/30, 2/1: Nutrition and productivity: interrelationships (Homework #1 assigned 1/30)
  - a) Empirical evidence
    - (1) Poor Economics: Chapter 2
    - ii) From income to nutrition:
      - (1) Income → Nutrition: A study of Maharashtra, India. Subramanian and Deaton (1996)
    - iii) \*Evaluation of "Give Directly": Haushofer and Shapiro (2013)
    - iv) Children nutrition: Baird, Hicks, Kremer, and Miguel (2011)
- 3) 2/6, 2/8: Health and health care: (Homework #2 assigned 2/8)
  - a) Hyperbolic discounting, information, beliefs, and the demand for health
    - i) \*Poor Economics: Chapter 3
    - ii) Thornton (2008), Cohen, Dupas and Schaner (2015), Schilbach (2015)
  - b)\*Health Status in Rajasthan: Banerjee and Duflo (2003) A case study (and a movie) that looks at various aspects of health delivery and health status
    - i) \*Bjorkman et al. (2013)
    - ii) Miguel and Kremer (2007), Das et al. (2016)
- 4) 2/13, 2/15, 2/20, Education (Homework #3 assigned 2/20)
  - a)\*Poor Economics: Chapter 4
  - b) An overview of the problems: Do parents care about education? Can they afford it? What is education good for?
    - i) What are the benefits of education: the Ghana Secondary School study: \*Duflo, Dupas and Kremer (2017)
  - c) The determinants of education decision: the benefits of education, perceptions, information, etc.
    - i) \*Dizon-Ross (2015)
    - ii) Jensen (2010), Nguyen (2008)
  - d)The supply of education
- 5) 2/22: Discrimination
  - a) The returns to girls: Jensen (2010)
  - b) Norms and perception: Beaman et al. (2012)
  - c) The possible backlash of economic growth and Development. Jayachandran (2015)
  - d)\*Discrimination and the value of girls: Qian (2005)
- 6) 2/27: Bargaining within families
  - a) Income is not spent in the same way by women and by men: Evidence from Brazil (Thomas (1990)), the United Kingdom Child Benefit allowance (Lundberg, Pollak, and

- Wales (1996)), a pension program in South Africa (Duflo (2003)).
- b) Competition within the family is not limited to sharing the resources. It leads to lower productivity and lower welfare for all members in the family: \*Udry (1996); Duflo and Udry (2004)

## \*\*\*\*3/1: Midterm Exam\*\*\*\*\*

- 7) 3/6: Households and the Labor Market (Homework #4 assigned 3/6, Group Presentation Assigned)
  - a) \*Households both sell and hire labor: Benjamin (1992) and the test for separation
  - b) \*The effect of productivity shocks on wages: Jayachandran (2006)
  - c) Nominal wage rigidities in rural India: Kaur (2017)

# \*\*\*\*\* No Class 3/8, Spring Break 3/13, 3/15 \*\*\*\*\*\*

- 8) 3/20, 3/22: Land Markets
  - a) \*Why land reform? Banerjee (1999)
  - b) \* A successful tenancy reform in India: Banerjee, Gertler, and Ghatak (2002)
  - c) The impacts of land reform: the case of El Salvador: Montero (2017)
- 9) 3/27 and 3/29: Insurance (Homework #5 assigned 3/29)

Poor Economics, Chapter 6

- a)\*Ray, chapter 15.
- b) Insurance is only partial: the consumption of household members in Cote d'Ivoire is linked to their income: Deaton (1997), pp 372-383.
- c)\*In West Africa, villagers lend to each other and achieve a certain degree of insurance: Udry (1990)
- d) Mutual insurance in the village does not happen in the void. It depends on the strength of local institutions: Townsend (1995).
- 10) **4/3:** Savings
  - a) \*Poor Economics: Chapter 8
  - b) \*Do poor people save in good times in anticipation of bad times? Savings by rice farmers in Thailand: Paxson (1992)
  - c) The psychological difficulty to save: Ashraf, Karlan, and Yin (2006) and
  - d) \*Dupas and Robinson (2013)
- 11) **4/5, 4/10, 4/12:** Credit Markets
  - a)\*Poor Economics: Chapter 7 and Chapter 9
  - b) Why do informal money-lenders charge interest rates that are so high? Aleem (1990)
  - c)\*Watch *Last Week Tonight* episode on payday loans: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDylgzybWAw
  - d) Microcredit: magic bullet or disaster: \*Banerjee, Duflo, Glennerster, and Kinnan (2015), Banerjee, Breza, Duflo and Kinnan (2016), Breza and Kinnan (2017)
  - e) Entrepreneurial Credit: McKenzie (2017),

# \*\*\*\*\*\* FRIDAY 4/13 PRESENTATIONS \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

# 12) 4/17, 4/19: Firms (Homework #6 assigned 4/17)

- a) Interfirm Relationships
  - i) Theory of relational contracting: Baker, Gibbons, and Murphy (2002)
  - ii) Can relationships be leveraged to combat constraints?: McMillan and Woodruff (1999)
  - iii) Do firms benefit from ties with one another?: \*Cai and Szeidl (2016)
- b)Firms and the Labor Market
  - i) Management frictions and firm performance: \*Bloom et al (2013)
  - ii) Financial Literacy and Job Training Programs: Management/Entrepreneur Training: Drexler et al (2014), McKenzie and Puerto (2017)
  - iii) Information frictions, certification and referrals: Bassi and Nansamba (2016), Beaman and Magruder (2012)

# 13) **4/24:** Information

- a) The role of price information: Jensen (2007)
- b) Learning from peers: Conley and Udry (2010) and Foster and Rosenzweig (1995)
- c) \*Social networks and information diffusion: Banerjee et al (2013)
- d) Taking advantage of the social network to spread information: Beaman et al (2015)

\*\*\*\*\*Final Exam date (sometime during exam week 5/3-5/12) and location to be announced\*\*\*\*\*

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