

Vinicius Okada da Silva

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

University of Tampa
Visiting Assistant Professor

August 2025 – Present

EDUCATION

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Ph.D. in Economics

2019 – 2025

Case Western Reserve University
BA Economics, BS Math and Physics

2015 – 2019

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Economic History, Development Economics

RESEARCH

Job Market Paper:

“Land Grants in Colonial Brazil: Long-Term Effects on Inequality and Development”

Other Working Papers:

“Jesuit Missionaries in the Colonial Amazon: Long-term Effects on Human Capital” (*Submitted*)

“Long-Lasting Effects of Bible Translations on Literacy: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa”
with Noelia Romero, Abigail Stocker, and Rebecca Thornton

“Staple Crop Pest Damage and Natural Resources Exploitation: Fall Army Worm Infestation and Charcoal Production in Zambia”
with Protensia Hadunka

Work in Progress:

“Terrorism Activities and Children Outcomes”
with Togbedji Gansey and Mahounan Yedomiffi

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Department of Economics - University of Illinois

Instructor

Fall 2022 – Spring 2023

ECON 303 - Intermediate Macroeconomics

Head Teaching Assistant

Fall 2021 – Spring 2022; Fall 2023 – Spring 2025

ECON 303 - Intermediate Macroeconomics

Teaching Assistant

Fall 2020 – Spring 2021

ECON 303 - Intermediate Macroeconomics

List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent:

Fall 2020, Fall 2021, Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025

Case Western Reserve University

Supplemental Instructor

PHYS 121 – General Physics I: Mechanics

Fall 2018 – Spring 2019

AWARDS

University of Illinois Lemann Fellowship

Summer 2023

University of Illinois Conference Travel Award

Fall 2023

University of Illinois Graduate Fellowship

Fall 2019, Spring 2020

PRESENTATIONS

[MWIEDC] Midwest International Economic Development Conference

2025

[NEUDC] Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference

2024

[ASREC] Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture Conference

2023

[SEA] Southern Economic Association

2023

[CIES] Comparative & International Education Society Conference

2023

Development Day at Notre Dame

2021

University of Illinois, Economics Department - Applied Micro Seminars

2020–2024

University of Illinois, Agricultural & Consumer Economics Department IPAD seminar

2024

LANGUAGES

Portuguese (Native), English (Fluent), French (Intermediate)

REFEREE SERVICES

Economics of Education Review

REFERENCES

Prof. Richard Akresh
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ABSTRACTS

Land Grants in Colonial Brazil: Long-Term Effects on Development (Job Market Paper)

Abstract: The economics literature has argued that inequality can positively or negatively impact long-term economic development. Brazil is a prime case study due to its colonial history of land inequality. This paper examines the long-term effects of colonial land grants on current agricultural land distribution and development across Brazilian municipalities. Using a novel dataset that I collected of 3,577 grants from Brazil's Northeast and Southeast regions, along with historical and modern census data, I find that these grants are associated with increased land concentration – showing a 2-8% increase in large farm holdings in 1920 and 1995. Municipalities with land grants exhibit higher modern GDP per capita and HDI, but also greater income inequality, more land conflicts, and less efficient land utilization. I also test how the land grants interact with other colonial institutions to study the drivers of land concentration. The research highlights the complex relationship between inequality and development in Brazil, which was shaped by its colonial institutions.

Jesuit Missionaries in the Colonial Amazon: Long-term Effects on Human Capital

Abstract: This paper examines the long-term effects of Jesuit missions on human capital and development in the Brazilian Amazon. Using novel Brazilian census data from 1872 and 1890, combined with the modern census of 2010, along with a new dataset on the locations of Jesuit missions in the Brazilian Amazon, I find that areas closer to former missions had higher literacy rates in the 19th century, and this difference persists to the present day. Additionally, I observe similar results when employing an instrumental variable approach that considers the locations of Tupi-speaking tribes in the area, as well as when comparing the Jesuits' impact to that of other missionary orders. By analyzing individual-level data from the decennial censuses between 1970 and 2010, I demonstrate that these effects have persisted over time.

Long-Lasting Effects of Bible Translations on Literacy: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa

with Noelia Romero, Abigail Stocker, and Rebecca Thornton

Abstract: This paper evaluates the impact of early life exposure to mother-tongue Bible translations in the 1980s on adult educational outcomes. We analyze data from a sample of approximately 75,000 adults in the Demographic and Health Surveys in 13 sub-Saharan African countries. Our difference-in-differences strategy compares educational outcomes within and across ethno-linguistic groups and accounts for the differential timing of Bible translations and trends in outcomes over time. Individuals born ten years after the first-known Bible translation for their ethno-linguistic group have an 11 percentage point increase in the likelihood of being literate as adults, a gain of 1.2 years of education, and a 17 percentage point gain in the likelihood of completing primary school. Effects do not vary greatly by gender or by regional prevalence of Muslim faith. We discuss possible mechanisms underlying our results, finding evidence of the potential importance of complementarities with inputs concentrated around historical missions.

Staple Crop Pest Damage and Natural Resources Exploitation: Fall Army Worm Infestation and Charcoal Production in Zambia

with Protensia Hadunka

Abstract: Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is home to some of the world's highest deforestation rates. One driver may be negative agricultural shocks that drive households to consume natural resources as a coping mechanism. This paper uses primary household panel data from Zambia to estimate the effect of introducing an agricultural pest, fall armyworms (FAW), on charcoal production. We exploit exogenous variation in the intensity of exposure to FAW across households and years to identify their effect. We find a positive and significant effect of FAW on charcoal production and deforestation. The estimates indicate that the FAW in a village increases the probability of a farmer producing charcoal by 3.48 percentage points, from 22 percent to 25 percent, leading to an increase in deforestation of 13.6 percent. The results also indicate that when methods to mitigate FAW damage are available, farmers are less likely to resort to charcoal production as a coping strategy. Having the ability to reduce the share of maize, diversify the crops produced, use pesticides, or migrate for off-farm employment is associated

with successful ways to mitigate the use of charcoal in the face of agricultural production shocks. Farmers' coping strategies in response to FAW attacks reduce charcoal production by 15 to 80 kg per household during an invasion.