

# Vinicius Okada da Silva

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## Education

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	2019 – Expected May, 2025
<i>Ph.D. in Economics</i>	
Case Western Reserve University	2015 – 2019
<i>BA Economics, BS Math and Physics</i>	

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## Research Interests

Economic History, Development Economics

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## Working Papers

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

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

"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*

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## Work in Progress

"Terrorism Activities and Children Outcomes"  
*with Togbedji Gansey and Mahounan Yedomiffi*

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## Teaching Experience

Department of Economics - University of Illinois

**Instructor:**

*Fall 2022 - Spring 2023: ECON 303 - Intermediate Macroeconomics*

**Head Teaching Assistant:**

*Fall 2023 - Spring 2025: ECON 303 - Intermediate Macroeconomics*

*Fall 2021 - Spring 2022: 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

Case Western Reserve University

**Supplemental Instructor:**

*Fall 2018 - Spring 2019: PHYS 121 - General Physics I - Mechanics*

## *Awards*

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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*

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- *"Land Grants in Colonial Brazil: Long-Term Effects on Inequality and Development."*  
[Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference \[NEUDC\]](#) (November 2024)  
Centre for the Study of African Economies [CSAE] (Accepted)  
[Midwest International Economic Development Conference \[MWIEDC\]](#) (Accepted)
- *"Jesuit Missionaries in the Colonial Amazon: Long-term Effects on Human Capital."*  
[Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture Conference \[ASREC\]](#) (2023)  
[Development Day at Notre Dame](#) (2021)
- *"Long-Lasting Effects of Exposure to Bible Translations: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa."*  
[Southern Economic Association \[SEA\]](#) (2023)  
[Comparative & International Education Society Conference \[CIES\]](#) (2023)
- University of Illinois, Economics Department - Applied Micro Seminars (2020-2024)
- University of Illinois, Agricultural & Consumer Economics Department IPAD seminar (2024)

## *Citizenship*

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*Brazil, United States*

## *Languages*

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

## *Referee*

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*Economics of Education Review*

## *References*

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**"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, HDI, but also greater income inequality, more land conflicts, and less 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 aims to identify Jesuit missions' long-term impact on human capital and development in the Brazilian Amazon. Using Brazilian census data from 1872 and 2010 combined with a novel dataset on the location of Jesuit missions in the Brazilian Amazon, I find that places closer to the former missions had higher literacy rates in both periods. To estimate the causal effect, I use an instrumental variable approach that considers the locations of Tupi-speaking tribes in the region. I also compare the impacts of the Jesuits against other missionary orders. Using microcensus data, the results indicate that the effects have persisted through 1970-2010. Further, demographic differences, the number of schools, or school attendance do not explain the results. This paper extends and reinforces the literature analyzing the positive effects of missionaries' transmission of human capital in the colonial period.

**"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.