

ECON 1291: DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS
Syllabus (Revised November 16, 2021)

Department of Economics
Northeastern University
Fall 2021

Professor: Silvia Prina

Email: s.prina@northeastern.edu

Office hours

In person:

Fridays, 12:00pm – 1:00pm, 317 Lake Hall

In Zoom:

Wednesday, 9:00am – 10:00am

<https://northeastern.zoom.us/j/98335036181?pwd=R1pPSUFIaGF2MVErQk10a0lSYmZnQT09>

Meeting ID: 983 3503 6181

Passcode: PrinaOH

Teaching Assistant (TA): Redina Tahaj

Email: tahaj.r@northeastern.edu

Office hours

In person:

Mondays, 1:30pm – 2:30pm, 308 Holmes Hall

In Zoom:

Thursdays, 9:00am – 10:00am

<https://northeastern.zoom.us/j/91445847791?pwd=Z3c4RGt2Zk1kMDIFRk1GUkJNbnN6QT09>

Meeting ID: 914 4584 7791

Passcode: 074039

Course Webpage: <https://northeastern.instructure.com/courses/86721>

Lecture sessions

Tuesdays and Fridays, 1:35 PM – 3:15 PM

West Village G 108

Required textbook: *Essentials of Development Economics*, J. Edward Taylor and Travis J. Lybbert, 2015. Publisher: University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520283176.

An online version of the textbook is available via <https://library.northeastern.edu> and the required chapters are available in Canvas within in module under “Readings and Materials.” A hard copy of the book is not required, unless it is your preference.

Required materials include readings, lecture slides and videos. They are posted on Canvas. The course outline specifies the set of materials for each module. These materials will feature in lectures, quizzes, exams, and problem sets. I expect you to read and watch the required materials for each module in advance.

Required Tool: Top Hat. We will be using Top Hat (www.tophat.com) for our lectures, polls, questions, tests and more. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message.

- To register: many of you registered via the email invitation that was sent out. If you have not received this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/681016> (Note: our Course Join Code is 681016). Here is a link to a video showing on how to register for a Top Hat account: <https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Getting-Started-with-Top-Hat> as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

Support: should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

Prerequisites. The course is intended for students in all majors interested in global economic development. No training in statistics or econometrics is required to enroll in the course. However, within the course you will be introduced (or reintroduced) to the statistical and econometric tools used to conduct “impact evaluations” in development and labor economics. These empirical methods are the backbone of modern development economics, and you cannot fully engage with the policy issues we will examine unless you develop the skills to weigh the evidence. In short, if you don’t want to learn a bit of econometrics, this course is not for you.

Course Overview. This course explores social and economic development around the world. The focus will be on the following themes: income, poverty, inequality, human development, geography, growth, impact evaluation, health, education, financial markets, and trade. In the first part of the course, we will understand, measure, and analyze four key elements of economic development: income, poverty, inequality, and human development. Then, we will look at geography and economic growth theory and try to understand what are the determinants of economic growth. In the last part of the course, we’ll focus on major policy issues concerning health, education, credit, savings, gender differences and globalization. We will study which interventions worked and did not. We’ll draw on readings and perspectives from several academic disciplines throughout the course. However, we’ll return repeatedly to one unifying methodological theme: the usefulness of empirical economic tools in assessing the arguments presented in debates about development.

Course Goals. These are the expected student learning outcomes:

1. Introduce students to conceptual approaches to economic development.
2. Introduce students to facts pertaining to economic growth, inequality, poverty, and human development.
3. Familiarize students with the theory and practice of impact evaluation as applied to the assessment of the efficacy of poverty reduction strategies and development projects.
4. Equip students with basic data analysis tools. Specifically, by the end of the course, students should be able to open a data set in Microsoft Excel, calculate the mean and standard error of an outcome variable of interest, conduct a statistical comparison of the means of a variable across two groups, estimate the linear relationship between two variables, and read and interpret a table of regression results.

Grading. The class is not graded on a curve. It is possible that everyone will do very well, which will make me very happy. However, if you do not put effort into this class, you will likely not do well, i.e. you may receive a C or worse. Your grade in this course will be composed of three components:

- **In-Class Activities.** You will be required to complete 7 in-class activities, which are posted in Canvas. Students who will attend the lecture will solve the in-class activity during the lecture. Students who will not be able to attend the lecture, will watch the lecture’s recording and solve the in-class activity as well. **In-class activities must be submitted online via Canvas by the end of the week in which they take place.** Each activity counts for 2 points if submitted by the due date.
- **Reading Quizzes.** You will also be required to complete 10 readings quizzes on Canvas. The

quizzes are intended to check your understanding about the readings and to make sure you keep on track with the readings. Reading quizzes are graded on a scale from 1 to 3: you will get 3 points if all your answers in a quiz are correct, 2 points if half or more of your answers are correct, and 1 point if less than half of your answers are correct.

- **Problem Sets.** You will also be required to complete 8 problem sets, which are posted in Canvas. The problem sets are primarily intended to build your empirical skills. **Problem sets must be submitted online via Canvas by the due date.** Problem sets are graded on a $\sqrt{+}$ (6 points), $\sqrt{}$ (4 points), $\sqrt{-}$ (2 points) scale. Late problem sets will be penalized – for each day of lateness, your problem set score will drop by one grade (i.e., from a $\sqrt{}$, to a $\sqrt{-}$). You may work together on problem sets, but each student must hand in his or her own write-up of the answers.
- **Tests.** You are required to take at least two out of three tests. Each of your two best test scores will account for 20 points (out of a total of 140 points); your lowest test score will not enter into your final average. This means that you do not have to take the third test if you are happy with your first two scores. Given this policy, **no make-up tests will be given.** A detailed schedule of course topics and reading assignments is included at the end of the syllabus. Test dates are:
 - Test 1 October 5
 - Test 2 November 5
 - Test 3 December X (TBA by the University Registrar)
- **Lectures' involvement.** During the lectures I will be using Top Hat to ask you questions. Why? For several reasons! To keep you involved, to get your opinion through polls, and to check your understanding about topics covered in the lectures, readings and material.

Final Grade. Final points totals will be calculated as follows:

In-class activities	14 points
Reading quizzes	30 points
Problem sets	48 points
Two highest test grades	40 points
<u>Lectures' involvement</u>	<u>8 points</u>
Total	140 points

Your final grade for the course will be calculated using this formula. No extra credit will be made available, and the course will not be graded on a curve. I encourage you to keep track of the grades you receive throughout the semester. If you fail to keep track of your progress over the course of the semester, you are welcome to attend office hours to ask about your grade.

It is your responsibility to keep all graded assignments for the duration of the semester. If, at any point in the semester, you come to believe that we have recorded any grade incorrectly (including cases where you believe you turned in an assignment, but we have no record of your grade), your graded assignment serves as your receipt. In other words, we can only change your recorded grade if you are able to produce the graded assignment.

Expectations for Students. You must attend class. Each course activity builds on previous lectures and assignments; if you miss the lectures, you will likely fall further and further behind over the course of the semester.

You must do the required readings prior to the start of each week. Course material builds on the assigned readings. You are also expected to complete and submit problem sets and quizzes by their due date via Canvas, and to upload the in-class activities by the end of the week in which they were done in class.

Your contributions to in-class activities and discussions and your performance on problem sets, quizzes, and tests allow the instructors to assess your level of engagement, effort, and understanding of material and concepts throughout the course. I look to students to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, provide opinions, answer questions, and of course, ask questions. A lively and engaged classroom is not only more enjoyable for all of us, but is proven to increase learning. You will have opportunities to receive feedback, help, or clarification on course material from the instructors. If you encounter challenges at any point, please contact me during office hours to discuss your concerns and I will attempt to provide assistance so you can be successful in this course.

Communication. Communication between students and instructors should occur during office hours. I strongly encourage you to ask questions about the course material. Please plan to visit me or the TA (or both) during office hours in Zoom to introduce yourself or discuss any topic related to the course material or economics more broadly. Our conversations during office hours will allow us to get to know each other better and to foster a more engaged and interactive intellectual environment. If you cannot attend the instructors' drop-in office hours because of a course conflict, you should email us to set up an appointment.

Academic Integrity. You must strictly adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. Violations of academic honesty will be dealt with as described under university regulations. Any violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (OSCCR). The academic integrity policies and procedures that govern all undergraduates at Northeastern University may be found at: <http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academic-integrity-policy/>

The University does not tolerate cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. This includes but is not limited to consulting with another person during an exam and submitting assignments prepared by someone other than you. Ignorance will not be permitted as an excuse. If you are not sure whether something you plan to submit would be considered either cheating or plagiarism, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification.

Please be particularly aware of the policy regarding plagiarism. As you probably know, plagiarism involves representing anyone else's words or ideas as your own. It doesn't matter where you got these ideas—from a book, on the web, from a fellow-student, from your mother. It doesn't matter whether you quote the source directly or paraphrase it; if you are not the originator of the words or ideas, you must state clearly and specifically where they came from. If you are not sure whether something you plan to submit would be considered either cheating or plagiarism, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification. You can also consult the guide "Avoiding Plagiarism" on the NU Library Website at http://www.lib.neu.edu/online_research/help/avoiding_plagiarism/.

Students with Disabilities. Northeastern University and the Disability Resource Center (DRC) are committed to providing disability services that enable students who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) to participate fully in the activities of the university. To receive accommodations through the DRC, students must provide appropriate documentation that demonstrates a current substantially limiting disability. The DRC office then prepares a Professor Notification Letter (PNL) for course instructors regarding needed accommodations. Students are responsible for presenting this letter to their instructors by the end of the drop/add period.

If you have already received a PNL from DRC, please email a copy to the Professor on or before September 16. We will work with you to arrange suitable accommodation. If you do not yet have a PNL, please consult with DRC as soon as possible (contact staff at 617.373.2675 or via email at DRCDocumentation@northeastern.edu). Additional information is available on the DRC website at:

<http://www.northeastern.edu/drc/>).

Copyright Notice. My lectures and course materials, including slides presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials I create. No part of this course material may be reproduced, transmitted, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any language or computer language, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, magnetic, optical, chemical, manual, or otherwise, without my express prior written permission. Similarly, you own copyright in your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course web site, I will ask for your written permission.

Check. Great, you are still reading! To confirm that you indeed read the syllabus, please email a picture of a flamingo to Professor Prina (s.prina@northeastern.edu) with the subject line “ECON1291 flamingo confirmation.”

Tentative Schedule & Reading List **(Revised November 16, 2021)**

Dates, topics, and assignments are subject to change over the course of the semester.

Please check Canvas for an updated Course Outline

All required readings, including the textbook's chapters can be accessed via Canvas.

MODULE 1 – INTRODUCTION

September 10

L1 Introduction

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 1

Activities and Assignments:

- Math Preparedness Assessment (due 9/11 at 11:59pm, non-graded)
- Baseline Learning Assessment (due 9/11 at 11:59pm, non-graded)
- Video and Quiz (due 9/11 at 11:59pm, non-graded)
https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_shows_the_best_stats_you_ve_ever_seen/transcript

MODULE 2 – INCOME & EXCEL TUTORING

September 13-19

September 14

L2 Income

Required Readings:

Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 3

September 17 – CLASS ON ZOOM: PLEASE CONNECT THROUGH CANVAS

L3 Excel tutoring

Required Material:

Material provided by NULab (and posted in Canvas)

MODULE 3 – POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

September 20-26

September 21

L4 Poverty

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 4
- “The Economic Lives of the Poor,” by Banerjee and Duflo

Activities and Assignments:

- In-Class Activity 1 on Tuesday (must be submitted by 9/21 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 1 (due 9/21 at 11:59pm)

September 24

L5 Inequality and Human Development

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 5
- Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 6, pp. 132-140

Activities and Assignments:

- In-Class Activity 2 on Friday (must be submitted by 9/25 at 11:59pm)
- Problem Set 1 (due 9/25 at 11:59pm)

MODULE 4 – GEOGRAPHY

September 27-October 3

September 28

L6 Geography

Required Readings:

- “Tropics, Germs, and Crops,” by Easterly and Levine

October 1

L7 Geography and review session

Activities and Assignments:

- In-Class Activity 3 (must be submitted by 10/2 at 11:59pm)
- Problem Set 2 (due 10/2 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 2 (due 10/2 at 11:59pm)

October 5 – Test 1 on Modules 1-4

MODULE 5 - Growth

October 4-10

October 8

L8 Growth

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 7
- “The elusive quest for growth,” Ch3, Easterly

Activities and Assignments:

- Problem Set 3 (due 10/9 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 3 (due 10/9 at 11:59pm)

MODULE 6 – IMPACT EVALUATION, part A

October 11-17

October 12 and 15

L9 and L10 Impact evaluation – causal inference

Required Readings:

- “Mastering ‘Metrics,” Ch1 - Angrist and Pischke
- “Impact Evaluation in Practice,” Ch3 - Causal Inference and Counterfactuals

MODULE 7 – IMPACT EVALUATION, part B

October 18-24

October 19 and 22

L11 and L12 Impact evaluation – RCTs

Required Readings:

- “Impact Evaluation in Practice,” Ch 4 - Randomized Assignment
- Use of Randomization in the Evaluation of Development Effectiveness, by Duflo and Kremer (ONLY pp. 93-98 and 107-113)

Activities and Assignments:

- Non-Graded Exercise on Tuesday
- In-Class Activity 4 on Friday (must be submitted by 10/23 at 11:59pm)
- Problem Set 4 (due 10/23 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 4 (due 10/23 at 11:59pm)

MODULE 8 – HEALTH, part A

October 25-October 31

October 26

L13 Health facts and health in early childhood

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Ch6 (ONLY pp. 148-164)
- “Deworming: A Best Buy for Development,” JPAL Policy Brief

October 29

L14 Health in early childhood

Required Readings:

- “Do Infants Benefit When Older Siblings are Dewormed?,” World Bank

Activities and Assignments:

- In-Class Activity 5 on Tuesday (must be submitted by 10/30 at 11:59pm)

MODULE 9 – HEALTH, part B

November 1-7

L15 Health: the demand for prevention

November 2

Required Readings:

- “Global Health Systems: Pricing and User Fees,” by Dupas
- “The Price Is Wrong,” JPAL Policy Brief
- “Incentives for Immunization,” JPAL Policy Brief

Activities and Assignments:

- In-Class Activity 6 on Tuesday (must be submitted by 11/2 at 11:59pm)
- Problem Set 5 (due 11/2 at 11:59pm)

November 5 – Test 2 on Modules 5-9

MODULE 10 – HEALTH & EDUCATION, part A

November 8-14

November 9

L16 Health, AIDS/HIV and behavioral economics

Required Readings:

- To Mate – The Naked Truth (pp. 253-267 Karlan-Appel)
- How behavioral economics is promoting better health around the world.pdf

November 12

L17 Education: facts and returns to education

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Ch6, ONLY pp. 140-148

Activities and Assignments:

- Problem Set 6 (due 11/13 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 5 (due 11/13 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 6 about the video “Educating Yaprak” (due 11/13 at 11:59pm)
<http://tve.org/film/educating-yaprak/>

MODULE 11 – EDUCATION, part B

November 15-28

November 16

Class canceled

November 19

L18 Education: returns to education

Required Readings:

- “See Tomorrow’s Jobs, Invest in Girls Today,” JPAL Policy Brief
- “The Challenge of Education and Learning in the Developing World,” Kremer et al.
- “Improving Education Outcomes in Developing Countries: Evidence, Knowledge Gaps, and Policy Implications,” Glewwe and Muralidharan, ONLY pp. 673-701

November 23

L19 Education: improving school quality

Required Readings:

- “Field Experiments in Education in Developing Countries,” Muralidharan, ONLY Sections 3.2-3.4

November 26 – No class: Thanksgiving

Activities and Assignments:

- Problem Set 7 (due 11/24 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 7 (due 11/24 at 11:59pm)

MODULE 12 – MICROCREDIT

November 29-December 5

November 30

L20 Microcredit

Required Readings:

- Essentials of Development Economics, Chapter 12
- Group Lending and Individual Lending, pp. 112-122 by Karlan and Appel

December 3

L21 Empirical evidence on microcredit

Required Readings:

- “Where Credit Is Due,” JPAL Policy Brief
- Evaluating Microcredit, pp. 66-83 by Karlan and Appel

Activities and Assignments:

- Reading Quiz 8 (due 12/4 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 9 (due 12/4 at 11:59pm)
- In-Class Activity 7 on Friday (must be submitted by 12/4 at 11:59pm)

MODULE 13 – SAVINGS

December 6-8

December 7

L22 Savings

Required Readings:

- The Economics of Microfinance, Ch6 Savings, pp.169-194
- “Helping the Poor Save More,” by Karlan
- To Save

Activities and Assignments:

- Problem Set 8 (due 12/8 at 11:59pm)
- Reading Quiz 10 (due 12/8 at 11:59pm)

December 14 (West Village G 102) – Test 3 on Modules 10-13
