
Economics 499
Seminar in Economics: Economics of Africa
Spring 2021

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Office Hours (Zoom):	Mondays, 2.00–3.00 P.M. or by appointment

Overview and Motivation: This is a seminar class on the economics of sub-Saharan Africa. We'll cover topics including history (slave trades, colonialism, civil wars), politics and democratization, health, migration, foreign aid, corruption, natural resources, and education, and more, in the context of Africa and the economic development of African countries.

GCCR: The assignments in this class satisfy the University GCCR (Graduation Composition and Communication Requirement). The paper and presentations will be discussed in more detail at the appropriate time during the semester.

Readings: We'll rely on a variety of sources for reading material, including journal articles, news articles, and other sources. Readings will be posted on Canvas.

Exams: There will be two exams, each worth 20% of your final grade. They are scheduled for **March 9** and **April 20**. The exams are weighted equally, and the second exam is not cumulative. Makeup exams will not be given — you must contact me as soon as possible if you must miss an exam for an official university function, religious observance, or if you are physically unable to take an exam. There is no final exam in the class.

Country Paper: There will be a final paper (15–18 pages) in which you will analyze an economic issue in a particular African country, incorporating some economic analysis. This paper will be worth 20% of your final course grade, and will be due on **Tuesday, May 11** by 5.00 P.M. We'll talk more about the paper later in the semester; there will be additional deadlines (choosing a topic, turning in an outline, turning in a draft) associated with the paper, and part of your grade on the paper will relate to these intermediate steps. You will receive feedback on each stage of the process.

Map Quiz: On **Tuesday, February 9**, during the last 20 minutes of class, you'll take a quiz on which you'll label the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. This counts as 5% of your final course grade. I'll hand out the map on the first day of class, and more information is on the course website.

Presentations: There will be two sets of presentations. The first will be the week of February 23–25, and will consist of group presentations introducing the rest of the class to a specific country, its economy, and particular issues facing the country. The second set of presentations will be the last week of class (April 27–29), and each group will discuss a particular topic of their choosing.

related to the economics of Africa (which may be related to your paper). The first presentations will be 15 minutes long each, with about 3 students in each group; group sizes will vary more for the second presentations, but the guideline is again 5 minutes per group member. There is also a peer feedback component before each presentation to the class. For each presentation, you'll each turn in a two-page writeup about what you've learned, the feedback that you received, how your group worked together (who did what, and whether you thought that was fair). Your grade will be a combination of my grade for the group presentation and the writeup. If the consensus of the group is that you did not participate fully, your grade will be reduced accordingly. Each of these presentations is worth a total of 10% of your final course grade.

Assignments and Participation: Periodically, there will be assignments relating to the course material. Some of these assignments will have a required participation component. Together, these will contribute 15% of your final course grade. A continuing assignment will be that you'll follow a specific country throughout the semester, relating that country's experiences to the more general trends we discuss in class.

Summary of Grading:

2 Exams	20% each
Paper	20%
2 Group Presentations	10% each
Map Quiz	5%
Assignments	15%

Key Dates:

Tuesday, February 9	Map quiz
February 23 – 25	Country presentations
Tuesday, March 9	Exam #1
Tuesday, April 20	Exam #2
April 27 – 29	Topic presentations (and other material)
Tuesday, May 11	Papers due by 5 p.m.

Topics, in Approximate Order:

Introduction, history, and geography
Economic background
Natural resources
Civil wars
Ethnic diversity
Corruption
Foreign aid
Microfinance
Health
Millennium Villages
Migration
International trade and finance