

ECO403H1S
Topics in Development Economics and Policy

Department of Economics
University of Toronto

Winter 2021

Course description

This course will examine a variety of issues pertaining to economic development. Topics will include poverty and inequality, governance and institutions, human capital formation, and aid, trade, and migration.

The course will have a heavy emphasis on quantitative empirical methods. As a project-oriented capstone course, students will learn how to use economic tools and apply them to analyze questions in development economics.

Course information

Instructor: Eva Vivalt
E-mail: eva.vivalt@utoronto.ca
Office hours: Friday 10-11 am
<https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/96093860157>
Meeting ID: 960 9386 0157
Passcode: 323688

TAs:
Dina O'Brien
E-mail: dina.obrien@mail.utoronto.ca
Office hours: Friday 4-5 pm
<https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/86418605733>
Meeting ID: 864 1860 5733
Passcode: 688156

Alison Joan Cane
E-mail: a.cane@mail.utoronto.ca

Time zone information: All due dates and times are stated in local Toronto time. Please note that Eastern Standard Time ends Sunday, March 14, 2021, 2:00 am. I will not accept confusion over time zones as an excuse for lateness or missed tests/work.

If you're in a very bad time zone for the lectures and tutorials, let me know. We can try to find alternative times for the in-class assessments.

Organization: The course will be conducted synchronously, with lectures later uploaded to Quercus for asynchronous viewing. Please note that some of the assessments will be conducted synchronously, so plan accordingly. You will need:

- a working microphone and webcam (on a computer, not on a smartphone)
- a sufficiently good internet connection to participate in video calls for assessments
- the ability to upload files (e.g. Word, pdf) to Quercus

Technical difficulties are not a valid excuse for failing to submit assessments on time, so please be careful (e.g. make back-ups).

Lectures and tutorials will be held on Zoom. Please check Quercus for the link for your lecture and tutorial. Office hours will also be held on Zoom.

Lectures: There are two sections for this course:

Lec0101/Lec9101: Thursday 1-3 pm

Lec0201/Lec9201: Thursday 4-6 pm

It would be better for the two sections to be balanced, so if you are attending synchronously please attend the lecture of the section you are enrolled in. However, if you are interested in the other section, please email a TA to let them know, and after the first few weeks of the semester I'll have a better sense of whether this can be accommodated.

Tutorial: Friday 2-4 pm (both sections, using separate Zoom links)

Please check Quercus for Zoom link info.

Pre-requisites

One of each of the following:

1. Microeconomics: ECO200Y1/ECO204Y1/ECO206Y1
2. Macroeconomics: ECO202Y1/ECO208Y1/ECO209Y1
3. Quantitative methods for economics or statistics: ECO220Y1/ECO227Y1/
(STA237H1, STA238H1)/(STA247H1, STA248H1)/(STA257H1, STA261H1)

At least one FCE in ECO at the 300+ level.

You must meet the prerequisites before taking this course. The Department of Economics will check them and strictly enforce them, removing students who do not meet all requirements. I cannot waive the pre-requisites.

I expect that you will be able to perform basic calculus (i.e., take simple partial derivatives) and have a basic understanding of regressions. Anyone without a basic knowledge of empirical methods will find the course challenging.

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

Percentage	Component	Date(s)
20%	Mini problem sets (10)	Friday, Jan. 22 Friday, Jan. 29 Friday, Feb. 5 Friday, Feb. 26 Friday, Mar. 5 Friday, Mar. 12 Friday, Mar. 19 Friday, Mar. 26 Friday, Apr. 2 Friday, Apr. 9
20%	5-minute oral midterm test (1)	Thursday, Feb. 11 or Friday, Feb. 12
20%	Group presentation critiquing a journal article (1)	Friday, Jan. 22, Friday, Jan. 29 or Friday, Feb. 5
40%	Final project (1), with the following breakdown: 5% Project proposal 15% Project presentation 20% Final paper	Friday, Feb. 26 and Friday, Mar. 5 for the proposal (see notes); Friday, Mar. 12, Friday, Mar. 19, or Friday, Mar. 26 for the presentation (see notes); Friday, Apr. 16 for the final paper (see notes).

Mini problem sets: These are short questions, generally based around that week's lecture. Some early problem sets include Stata exercises. They will each be graded out of 2 points. Note that 2/2 does not mean you necessarily got every question correct. Think of this as your "participation" grade. If time permits, at the end of lecture we may discuss some of the questions in break-out rooms, however, you must write up and submit your own answers. If two students submit substantially the same responses, **both** will be penalized. You should upload your responses through Quercus by the end of the day that each problem set is due.

Oral midterm test: This is a 5-minute oral exam, scheduled one-on-one with a TA. More detail will be provided in class on the types of questions you can expect and how to prepare. The exam will be held during the normal lecture and tutorial times in week 5

(February 11 and 12). You will be able to sign up for a slot in advance. The exams will be recorded so as to provide a record that can be consulted in case of grading disputes.

Group presentation: In groups, students will present on a paper from a selected list during tutorial. The presentation should provide an overview of the paper, including details about its data, methods, and results, with an emphasis on thoughtful critique. Each presentation should run for 30 minutes including questions; students should prepare 20 minutes of material.

Final project: Students will complete the final project in groups. Each final project will be an extension of an existing journal article, e.g., a replication using updated data or new analyses. The journal article must make its code and data available. Groups will identify their own project topics, subject to this limitation, and the topics must be approved.

The project ideas will be reviewed briefly in tutorial on Feb. 26; if any group is informed after tutorial that they need to choose another topic, they will be allowed to put another idea forward in tutorial on Mar. 5, but they will be docked 20% on the assignment. Anyone not needing to present again on Mar. 5 may use this time to work on their project.

Students will also present on their projects in groups after signing up for a timeslot. By the time of the presentation, the groups should have results and be able to interpret them. They will then get feedback they can use to improve their final paper. The presentations should each run for 30 minutes including questions; students should prepare 20 minutes of material. The presentations will take place during tutorial on Mar. 12, Mar. 19, and Mar. 26.

After the presentation, you should have a clear idea of what you need to revise from your presentation for your final paper. The cumulative final paper will count as the final assessment for this course and is due on Friday, Apr. 16, during the final assessment period. You should structure your work on the final paper so that you get the bulk of it done by the end of classes. There is no other final assessment for this course.

Plan your presentation accordingly. Try to create at least one table and figure that you might want to include in your final paper, so you can get early feedback and revise accordingly.

The final paper has a firm page limit of 7 pages, double-spaced. Each paper should include a maximum of 1 table and 1 figure. Students must also submit clean replication files with their project (i.e., both the data and the code used on those data, such that a third party could obtain the same results by running the code on the data).

Note: when forming groups, it can be helpful to include people with different skills. In particular, it will be easier if someone in the group has coding experience.

Class Schedule

Week of	Topic	Assessment
Jan. 14	General introduction	None; introduction to Stata in tutorial
Jan. 21	Causal inference	Problem set; group presentations
Jan. 28	Impact evaluation	Problem set; group presentations
Feb. 4	Issues in impact evaluation	Problem set; group presentations
Feb. 11	Lecture and tutorial this week will be used for the midterm oral test.	Midterm oral test
-Reading Week-		
Feb. 25	Poverty and inequality	Problem set; project review
Mar. 4	Geography and institutions	Problem set; project review
Mar. 11	Aid	Problem set; project presentations
Mar. 18	Trade and migration	Problem set; project presentations
Mar. 25	Education	Problem set; project presentations
Apr. 1	Health	Problem set; no tutorial (Good Friday, university closed)
Apr. 8	Issues in evidence-based policy-making	Problem set

As the weekly lectures are largely based on journal articles, they will provide the background to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different empirical approaches and practice in critiquing academic papers (useful skills for the final project). In addition, the mini problem sets will be based on them.

There is no required textbook. A reading list comprising academic journal articles will be posted in Quercus.

Software

The course involves empirical analysis, so some kind of programming language or statistical software must be used. This course will use Stata *only*.

Stata is more accessible to the beginner, and many journal articles use Stata (this will be important when it comes time for the final project, as your life will be a lot easier if you can start with the replication files from the original journal article).

You can purchase Stata online at:

<http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/cgpcampus-order.html> A six month license will be sufficient. “Small Stata” is unlikely to suffice – go for Stata “IC”.

If you already know another programming language, like R or Python: Way to go! That’s awesome! But, unfortunately, anything other than Stata won’t be accepted this semester given everything else going on with the pandemic. You would have a harder time finding

a paper to replicate and it would be too hard on the TAs to evaluate your work in R along with others' work in Stata. That's the bad news. The good news is that you should find Stata really easy. If you are: a) exceptionally experienced at programming in R, b) able to find an interesting paper to replicate that uses R, c) willing to put in extra work to explain your code *extremely* thoroughly, come to my office hours to discuss using R for the final project. Regardless, you will have to use Stata for the mini problem sets so the TAs can grade them efficiently. There are a lot of mini problem sets, and it's a lot of work to grade them, so there is no flexibility here.

Course website, communications, and online lectures / tutorials:

We will be using Quercus to manage class communications, so it is **essential** that you log on and provide an email address that you check regularly! Make sure you are receiving notifications!

Lecture slides will be posted on Quercus, as well as lecture recordings (after lecture), additional readings, problem set questions, class announcements, and information about assessments. Links to meetings (for synchronous lectures and tutorials) will also be posted there.

Course policies

Examinations:

Appeals policy:

If a student wishes to appeal their midterm grade, or their grade on any other term assignment, they must submit a written explanation as to why they think their grade is mistaken.

You have two weeks from when an assignment's results are released to appeal the assessment's grade. The first week is a one-week "cooling off" period during which no appeals will be considered; you must submit your written explanation in the second week.

Please note that apart from trivial appeals such as points being added incorrectly, the entire item will be re-graded, and the appealed grade can be lower or higher than the original grade.

Missed tests:

A grade of zero will be given to students who do not write the midterm test, unless an appropriate and convincing note is received within one week of the missed test explaining why the test was missed.

For 2020-21, the Verification of Illness (or "doctor's note") is not required. Students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other

illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work must record their absence through the ACORN online absence declaration.

If a student has been excused from a midterm exam, they will be permitted to complete a “make-up” oral test one-on-one during the tutorial on Mar. 5 (after any remaining group proposal reviews are complete).

- Consistent with university policy, there is no “make-up test” for the make-up test. No medical excuses will be accepted, and a grade of zero will be applied if a student fails to write the make-up test.

Late assignments:

Problem sets and the final project are due at 11:59 pm Toronto time on the assigned dates.

Late problem sets will receive a grade of zero.

For the final project, the late penalty is 10% per day, for a maximum penalty of 50%. A project submitted more than 5 days late will be assigned a grade of zero.

E-mail policy:

I will do my best to respond to e-mail within 48 hours, but:

- a) I will not reply to e-mails that request information that can be found on the website or the syllabus, so you should check those places first;
- b) I will only respond to e-mails posing questions that can be answered in a sentence or two. Please consider whether your question is posed in such a way that it can be answered succinctly, and for detailed questions, please see me in office hours;
- c) I will not reply to e-mails regarding the results of graded material – for that, please see me in office hours;
- d) Please, please put “ECO403” in the subject line. Thanks!

If you have been waiting for a response, please double-check these items.

Academic misconduct:

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity, <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>). **Ignorance of the rules does not excuse cheating or plagiarism.**

Turnitin:

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Accessibility:

Students who require accommodation must register with Accessibility Services: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/accessibility-services-registration-and-documentation-requirements/>.

More generally, you may find other resources at Accessibility Services here: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>.

The Academic Success Centre can also help you with your learning goals: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>.

If you have any issues that affect you more than 3-4 days, please contact your College Registrar immediately so they can help: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>.

For course-related issues, please stop by office hours.

Recording:

This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session.

Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. In this course, you are permitted to download session videos and materials for your own academic use, but you should not copy, share, or use them for any other purpose without the explicit permission of the instructor.

For questions about the recording and use of videos in which you appear, please contact your instructor.

Final thoughts:

Online learning has its own challenges. Please, let's all be kind to each other. And my top tip is to start things early, well in advance of deadlines. Time management is hard on

your own. Lean on your peers in your group. TIP: Set up weekly group meetings for accountability. Chat with others using Quercus discussions.

Best of luck in this course and outside of it! The end of the pandemic is in sight!