ECO403H1F
Topics in Development Economics and Policy

Department of Economics
University of Toronto

Fall 2023

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 3-4 pm
               https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/96093860157
               Meeting ID: 960 9386 0157
               Passcode: 323688

TA: Alison Joan Cane
E-mail: a.cane@mail.utoronto.ca
Office hours: Tuesday 3-4 pm
               https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/81448022450
               Meeting ID: 814 4802 2450
               Passcode: 065914

Organization: The course will use a flipped classroom: videos on the subject material to be covered in a lecture will be posted on Quercus for asynchronous viewing the week before a lecture, and we will discuss and answer questions during lecture.

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

Office hours will be held on Zoom at the links above.

Lectures and Tutorials

Lec0101: Thursdays 10 am – 1 pm

Lec0201: Thursdays 2 pm – 5 pm

You are expected to have watched the lecture online before class. We will use the first hour each week (after the first week) to discuss questions relating to the video you watched. The second hour will be used largely for discussions of papers on the reading list, including in-class presentations on them. The final hour will be used for tutorial. You can also use this time to work on your group projects.

The week of Oct. 12 will be special: We will have a guest lecturer, Sindy Li, from IDinsight, talk about a past project and answer your questions about what it is like to work in development.

She will give a talk on Oct. 10 (details to be provided).

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	Due date(s)
10%	Empirical project	Wednesday, Oct. 4
20%	Midterm exam	Week of Thursday, Oct. 19
10%	Critique of a paper	Thursday, Sept. 14, Thursday, Sept. 21, Thursday, Sept. 28, Thursday, Oct. 5, Thursday, Oct. 26, Thursday, Nov. 2,

		Thursday, Nov. 16, Thursday, Nov. 23, or Thursday, Nov. 30 (see notes)

30%	Group project, with the following breakdown:
	     5% Project proposal (best of 2)
	     10% Project presentation
	     15% Project paper
		Thursday, Sept. 21 and Thursday, Sept. 28 for the proposal (see notes); Thursday, Oct. 5, Thursday, Oct. 12, Thursday, Oct. 26, Thursday, Nov. 2, or Thursday, Nov. 16 for the presentation (see notes); Friday, Dec. 1 for the project paper (see notes).

5%	Participation	Throughout lectures and tutorials
25%	Final exam	TBD during final exam period

The public health situation may result in test date changes.

Empirical project: This is a short assignment based on Stata to make sure everyone can get to a level of proficiency with using it for empirical analysis. The assignment will be posted by the second lecture and you must submit your responses online through Quercus by the end of the day that it is due. You must write up and submit your own answers. If two students submit substantially the same responses, **both** will be penalized.

Midterm exam: More detail will be provided in class on the types of questions you can expect and how to prepare. The exam will be held the week of Oct. 19, ideally in class if the public health situation allows. The midterm will cover topics up to and including the "Potential Outcomes Framework" (covered in the week of Oct. 5).

Critique of a paper: Each week (except the first week, the week of the special guest lecture, and the week of the midterm), students will present on one of the papers on the reading list, in groups of two (each group of two will present on a different paper, and the typical class will cover two papers). Plan these presentations to last 20 minutes. Following the presentation, the instructor and other students may ask you questions for up to 10 minutes, and the instructor may also use this time to make connections between the paper and other topics discussed in the course. In the presentations, you should describe the motivation of the paper you are critiquing; what data and methods it used; and what results it found. You should also add your own original critiques of the paper. *You are responsible for ensuring that every member of your group has a chance to critique the paper in some form.* A sign-up sheet for these presentations will be posted on Quercus.

Group project: Students will complete the project in groups of up to four students each. Each group 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 in development economics, subject to this limitation, and the topics must be approved. A list of journals will be provided for you to search for papers to replicate.

The project ideas will be reviewed briefly in tutorial on Sept. 21 and Sept. 28. Groups will be given 5 minutes each to orally present their proposals on both dates. One person can represent the group in this proposal presentation, and the entire group will be given the same grade. The final grade for the proposals will be given as a "best of 2". For example, if your group receives 3/5 for the first proposal and 4.5/5 for the second, only the second will count towards your final grade, and if your group receives 4/5 for the first proposal and 3.5/5 for the second, only the first will count. If your group is happy with its grade after the Sept. 21 presentation, it does not need to present again on Sept. 28. Your presentation should be very quick but include: 1) the name of the paper you are wanting to replicate and extend; 2) your motivation for why you want to replicate and extend this paper; 3) a screenshot that proves that the data you will need for your analysis are available. If your paper involves merging in external data, you need to show that both the original data and data to be merged in exist and that the merge can be done. Make sure to read about how the final paper will be graded before you pick a topic: if you do a very basic analysis on a boring topic, you will not get a high mark even if you implement it technically correctly.

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 preliminary results and be able to interpret them. They will then get feedback they can use to improve their 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 Oct. 5, Oct. 12, Oct. 26, Nov. 2, or Nov. 16. The rubric for the presentations will put substantial weight on ensuring you understand and can critique the original paper you are replicating and extending. *You are responsible for ensuring that every member of your group has a chance to critique the original paper in some form.*

After the presentation, you should have a clear idea of what you need to revise from your presentation for your paper. The paper is due on Friday, Dec. 1. You should structure your work on the paper so that you get the bulk of it done early. I don't care if you use Chat-GPT or other generative AI to edit the text you submit so long as: 1) you acknowledge it; 2) you understand the meaning of what is output (I reserve the right to quiz you on it); 3) you are responsible for both the good and the bad: if it tells you garbage and you don't correct it, that's on you.

Tip: Plan your presentation so as to improve your final paper. Try to create at least one table and figure that you might want to include in your paper, so you can get early

feedback and revise accordingly. Overall, the presentation should provide an overview of the paper, including motivation, details about its data, methods, and results.

The paper has a firm page limit of 7 pages, double-spaced. Each paper should include a maximum of 1 table and 1 figure (not included in the page limit) and a bibliography (also not included in the page limit). 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.

Regarding grading, the entire group will get the same grade for the proposal and the final paper; the group members will be graded individually for the presentation. However, the best presentations involve teamwork and everyone coming to a common understanding, so please do your best to work as a cohesive whole.

Participation: Points will be assigned based on active participation in lecture and tutorial. This includes, for example, watching the videos before the lectures and coming to class able to discuss them or ask questions about them, actively listening to classmates' presentations in lecture and tutorial and asking thoughtful questions.

Final exam: This will be run by the university during the normal final assessment period (date TBD). You will get more guidance on the kinds of questions to expect and how to prepare in lecture, closer to the time.

Class Schedule

Week of	Topic	Assessment/tutorial
Sept. 7	General introduction	Introduction to Stata in tutorial
Sept. 14	Causal inference	Project discussion
Sept. 21	Impact evaluation	Project proposals
Sept. 28	Issues in impact evaluation	Project proposals
Oct. 5	Potential outcomes framework	Project presentations
Oct. 12	Poverty and inequality	Project presentations*
Oct. 19	Midterm	No tutorial due to midterm
Oct. 26	Geography and institutions	Project presentations
Nov. 2	Aid	Project presentations

-Reading Week-

Nov. 16	Migration and trade	Project presentations
Nov. 23	Health	Review
Nov. 30	Education	Review

As previously mentioned, the week of Oct. 12 is special: there will be a special lecture on Oct. 10 rather than Oct. 12. Tutorials will still be held as normal.

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 group project).

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 group 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". You can also access Stata at Robarts Library (the TA can provide details in week 1).

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. You would have a harder time finding a paper to replicate and it would be too hard on the TA 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 group project. Regardless, you will have to use Stata for the empirical project so the TA can grade them efficiently.

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 or final 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 term work policy:

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

If you have a genuine emergency, you should email the instructor and TA by the deadline and supply one of the four forms of documentation approved by A&S:

- Absence declaration via ACORN;
- UofT Verification of Illness or Injury (VOI) Form;
- College Registrar's letter; or
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services.

It is an academic offense to feign illness to avoid a test or other assessment.

If a student has been excused from a midterm exam, they will be permitted to complete a "make-up" oral test one-on-one on Oct. 27.

- 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 take the make-up test.

The final will be governed by the University's rules for missing final exams

Late assignments:

The empirical project and the group project are due at 11:59 pm Toronto time on the assigned dates.

Late submissions will receive a grade of zero.

For the group 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. You must submit your code as part of your assignment. Failure to turn in the code on schedule for any reason (including submitting it but the file being corrupted) will incur the same penalties for the percent of the group project grade that the code is worth.

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). **Ignorance of the rules does not excuse cheating or plagiarism.**

Plagiarism Detection:

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

Crowdmark:

This course will use Crowdmark, a collaborative online grading tool for marking and providing feedback on graded term assessments. Crowdmark provides efficiencies with grading, data recording, returning term assessments and handling regrade requests. Copies of student work marked in Crowdmark, including grading and feedback, will be available online to students for at least one year. Digital (i.e., online) copies will serve as the authoritative record for course administrative purposes, and paper copies of assessments scanned and uploaded to Crowdmark will be destroyed after the term has ended and final grades are approved. If students have questions about how their information is stored on Crowdmark, please contact your course instructor.

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, may be recorded on video and made available to students in the course for viewing remotely.

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.

Safety:

If you are Covid+ or feeling unwell, please stay home. Please look out for each other and be sensitive to others in your class who may either be more at risk themselves or living with people who are more at risk. You never know everyone else's situation.