ECON 204: Global Poverty and Economic Development

Department of Economics
Williams College
Spring 2023
(syllabus revised February 2, 2023)

1 Contact Information and Course Logistics

1.1 Instructor

Dr. Pamela Jakiela (email: `pj5@williams.edu`)

1.2 Course Meetings

Mondays, Wednesdays from 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM in CDE A219

1.3 Office Hours

Professor Jakiela's office hours will be held on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 4:00 in 339 Schapiro. If you have a course that conflicts with my scheduled office hours, you can email me to set up an appointment for an alternative time. Please note that I am unable to meet in the evening or on weekends.

1.4 Course Websites

`https://pjakiela.github.io/ECON204/`

Most course material is available on the public website for the course. Specifically, the github website will have lecture slides, empirical exercises, and links to selected video lectures (from Spring 2021).

`https://www.gradescope.com/courses/477600`

All assignments will be posted on and submitted through gradescope. You'll receive an email inviting you to join the course, and that will allow you to set up a gradescope account linked to your Williams email address.

1.5 Communication

Email (`pj5@williams.edu`) is the best way to contact me. Under normal circumstances, I will try to respond to course-related emails withing two working days of receipt.[1] I am sometimes overwhelmed by the volume of email I receive; if I have not responded to you within two working days, please feel free to send me an email reminder.

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[1]So, if you send me an email on Tuesday at noon, I will try to respond by the end of the day on Thursday. I do not check my email on weekends. If you send me an email on Friday afternoon, I will respond to it by the end of the day on Tuesday.

1.6 Health Protocols for Spring 2023

We will follow all CDE health protocols. We expect this to include the following:

1. Wear a (N95, KN94, or surgical) mask in class and in office hours.

2. Do not come to class or attend in-person office hours if you are ill.

3. If you test positive for covid, follow campus guidelines in determining when to return to class.

4. Office hours will be accessible via zoom upon request.

2 What Is This Course About, and Who Should Take It?

2.1 Course Description

This course explores the historical determinants of global poverty and inequality, and analyzes the range of policy options available to promote economic development and equalize opportunities. Drawing on research in development economics, development studies, political science, and anthropology, we seek to understand the factors that shaped the global economy and contributed to the cross-country income disparities observed today. In addition, we'll use the tools of modern empirical microeconomics to assess the possibilities for eliminating global poverty and underdevelopment in the future.

Undergraduate students will receive 200-level credit and should not register at the 500-level.

2.2 Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be familiar with:

1. The geographic distribution of global poverty, and its evolution over time

2. The geographies, histories, and cultures of low- and middle-income countries

3. The key stages and themes in the history of development thought

4. The theory and practice of impact evaluation as applied to the assessment of the efficacy of development projects and other policies intended to alleviate global poverty

5. The range of policies available to reduce poverty, improve firm productivity, and promote sustainable development, and the evidence base associated with such policies

3 Readings

The first of two course reading packets is available from the Packet Room (Class of '37 House at 51 Park Street; open M-F 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM).

4 Assignments and Grading

Grades are calculated as follows:

Getting-to-know-you survey	1 point
Class participation	9 points
Twitter assignment	10 points
Readings comprehension questions	10 points
Reading quizzes	15 points
Data visualization exercises	15 points
Policy brief	20 points
Final exam	20 points

4.1 Getting-to-Know-You Survey

A getting-to-know-you survey is available now, and counts for one point in your final grade.

4.2 Class Participation

Active, constructive participation in class discussions is a critical part of the course. On each day of class, I will be assigning you a score on a scale of 0 to 10, as follows:

- 10: Genuinely insightful, original contributions to class discussion, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the readings

- 9: Thoughtfully engaging in class discussion

- 8: Present in class and making some reasonable comments

- 7: Present in class, but only perfunctory engagement with class discussion

- 6: Physically present but mentally elsewhere

- 0: Not present

I do not expect students to have perfect attendance: if you need to miss class once or twice during the semester, you do not need to seek approval from me in advance (though you are welcome to alert me if you wish). At the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest class participation scores. If you expect to miss more than two classes, or you encounter challenges (such as illness) that prevent you from attending class consistently, you should discuss these issues with me in office hours or over email. Regular absences will result in

a loss of class participation credit unless they are discussed with and approved by me in a timely manner.

For the data visualization labs, you should come to class ready to work in Stata SE 17 (which is available for free from OIT). Bring your laptop to class, and either make sure that it is fully charged or bring your power cord with you.

4.3   Twitter Assignment

You will prepare a twitter thread explaining an empirical paper in 8 to 10 tweets. The twitter assignment counts for 10 percent of your grade.

4.4   Reading Comprehension Questions

Assigned readings should be completed before class. To earn credit for each reading assignment, you must complete the associated comprehension questions on gradescope prior to the relevant class meeting. Your scores from the reading comprehension questions account for 10 percent of your final grade.

4.5   Reading Quizzes

In addition to the reading comprehension questions, there will be five unannounced one-question reading quizzes over the course of the semester. Your scores from the readings quizzes account for 15 percent of your final grade.

4.6   Data Visualization Exercises

We will complete three "Stata Labs" (though students who prefer to use R are welcome to do so) intended to familiarize students with data and build analysis and visualization skills. Nor prior experience with data analysis is assumed. The Stata Labs count for 15 percent of your final grade.

4.7   Policy Brief

Students will prepare a policy brief summarizing the results of an impact evaluation on a development policy topic of their choice. The policy brief counts for 20 percent of the final grade.

4.8   Final Exam

There will be a short, in-person final exam during the exam period. Your final exam score counts for 20 percent of your final grade.

4.9   Late Assignments

Unless otherwise stated, all (unexcused) late assignments will be penalized: the maximum grade will be lowered by 10 percent for every day late for the first five days (including

weekends). All assignments submitted more than five days late will receive half credit (less any reductions for incorrect responses).

5 Schedule of Topics and Important Dates

The schedule below is approximate, and may be updated as we progress through the semester.

Dates	Description
2/3	Organizational Meeting
2/6	What Is Poverty?
2/8	Geography
2/13, 2/15	The Long-Run Implications of the African Slave Trade
2/20, 2/22	The Long-Run Implications of Colonialism
2/27	The Big Push
3/1	Post-Independence Leaders
3/6, 3/8	Import Substitution and Export Promotion
3/13	Investments in Agriculture and Structural Transformation
3/15	The Washington Consensus and Structural Adjustment
4/3, 4/5	Firm Productivity
4/10, 4/12	Youth Unemployment
4/17, 4/19	Microenterprises and Self-Employment
4/24, 4/26	Agricultural Productivity
5/1, 5/3	Village Economies and Poverty Traps
5/8, 5/10	The Demand for Sustainability: A Case Study of Clean Cookstoves

6 Honor Code

Students are expected to adhere to the Williams College Honor Code. You should not present any work produced by individuals (or companies, institutions, or "machines" such as AI tools) outside this class as your own work under any circumstances. Any written work that you submit for any assignment must either be your own intellectual property or cited appropriately. If, at any point, you are unsure about how to appropriately cite others' work, please discuss this with me during office hours or over email.

Learning how to code involves a lot of googling, and it is increasingly possible to ask AI tools such as ChatGPT for assistance with coding. When you are completing the Stata Labs, you are free to use these tools to help you find the correct Stata syntax – but be

aware that the code that ChatGPT, etc., suggest is often incorrect. You are responsible for the work you submit.

7 Tutoring through the Peer Academic Support Network

As a Williams student, you can use the free tutoring services provided by the Peer Academic Support Network. Step-by-step instructions for finding and scheduling tutoring sessions are on the Peer Academic Support Network webpage: `https://www.williams.edu/peer-academic-support/`.

8 Health and Accessibility Resources

Students with disabilities or disabling conditions who experience barriers in this course are encouraged to contact me to discuss options for access and full course participation. The Office of Accessible Education is also available to facilitate the removal of barriers and to ensure access and reasonable accommodations. Students with documented disabilities or disabling conditions of any kind who may need accommodations for this course or who have questions about appropriate resources are encouraged to contact the Office of Accessible Education at `oaestaff@williams.edu`.

9 Classroom Culture

The Williams community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and non visible categories. I welcome all students in this course and expect that all students contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment. If you have any concerns about classroom climate, please come to me to share your concern.

10 Concluding Thoughts

Congratulations on making it to the end of the syllabus. Do professors enjoy writing syllabi? Not really. Do students enjoy reading them? Probably not. Hopefully, this document will provide us with a shared set of expectations for the semester, making the course more constructive and enjoyable for everyone. Also, if you send me an email containing a picture of a margay before February 6 (subject line: ECON 204 MARGAY), you will earn a point of extra credit.