

Course Syllabus

Econ 448A Winter 2025

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Knox

Email: Message me via Canvas (preferred) or knoxm@uw.edu

Class Meetings: T/Th 1:30-3:20 SAV 132

Office Hours: TBA

Perusall Access: <https://app.perusall.com/join/a-knox-7pb26> [Links to an external site.](#) (Note: Perusall has started charging for their services - the charge is \$10. Please let me know if this is a hardship.)

Course Meetings

In ECON 448, lectures will be offered in-person. Office hours will be offered on Zoom or in person. Assignments must be submitted via Canvas. Exams are in person only.

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the subject of international economic development, with a focus on population issues. Since I am an economist, we will be focusing on the topics and tools of economics, and the body of knowledge so far, as created by economists. Topics include demography, poverty and income inequality, fertility choice, sex selection, marriage choice and the role of women, parental investments in child health and education, including discrimination against girls.

Learning Objectives

- Students should be able to apply economic theory to identify and discuss the issues surrounding the topics listed above, and apply economic models to answer questions about these topics.
- Students should be able to comment on articles in the popular press and review articles in economic journals dealing with population and development, explaining and expanding upon the economic analysis they contain.
- Students should be able to apply data and data science methods to pose and address questions and problems that are relevant to these topics.
- Students should be able to explain the ethical and social implications of human data use in the study of households and families.
- Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to execute the life-cycle of an empirical project in population economics, including problem formulation, data collection or generation, data manipulation, analysis, and communication.

Course Organization

This course will combine lecturing on traditional microeconomic theory with in-depth discussion of real-world issues. This is not an easy course in terms of the reading and writing required. Please be prepared to spend a lot of time reading, and writing about, difficult material.

Text

There is no text for this topic. Lectures will be based on textbook excerpts, journal and newspaper and magazine articles, and my own knowledge of the subject. All readings will be available as PDFs in Canvas or for free online. If you need more accessible options, please let me know. It's a goal of mine to make all course readings accessible, but I'm not there yet, unfortunately.

Reading the assigned material before class ensures that we can have meaningful discussions and that you will get more from the lectures. To incentivize reading, I am using Perusall social notation system. Please sign up for an account at perusall.com using your Canvas name and email address (no need to give them your student id). Use class code TBA. There are currently 17 reading assignments, but I will drop 4 of your lowest Perusall scores to account for absences or other issues that arise.

Prerequisites

The explicit prerequisite for this course is a grade of 2.0 or higher in Econ 300. However, we will be reading papers from economic journals, and while we will be reviewing the concepts of regression analysis and interpretation, some familiarity with data analysis at the level of linear regression is strongly recommended. STAT 311 should be sufficient, but please discuss your background with me if you are not sure about your preparation.

Note: This course is part of the CAS data science minor and as such, we will have assignments that use the R statistical programming language (specifically RStudio) this quarter. You do not need to be familiar with R or RStudio, but you should be prepared to do a little extra work at the start of the quarter to begin using this software.

Evaluation

You will be graded on your class participation assignments, 4 problem sets (which are a hybrid of data analysis and traditional modeling and calculation problems), 2 non-cumulative midterm exams, and one 10-page group research paper and its associated preliminary assignments. All students who pass the course will receive W credit.

Class grades will be calculated as follows:

- Class Participation (Perusall, in-class exercises, and Class Participation Reflections) - 6%
- Problem sets (4 + first week assignment) – 24%
- Midterm Exams (2 non-cumulative exams after module 2 and module 4)- 40%
- Final Paper (includes all preliminary assignments for full credit) – 30%

I expect the class median to be approximately 3.5 and will curve grades as needed.

Problem Sets

It's nearly impossible to learn the tools of economics without working problems. I will assign a problem set for each of the four modules. They will be due about a week after we complete the module. You may work with other students, but please submit your own work. Some parts of the assignment may be graded for completion rather than accuracy.

Final Papers

We will discuss the paper requirements in depth in the second week of classes. You may work on your final paper with one other person, but each person should submit their own preliminary assignments.

Due Dates

You may request a due date extension of up to one week for **one** homework assignment, and all extension requests are automatically granted. Please fill out this form while logged in to google with your UW NetId to request an extension. However, there are no extensions for exams, so keep this in mind when requesting homework extensions.

Accommodations

Students receiving accommodations from Disability Resources for Students (DRS) should contact me about any needed disability accommodations as soon as possible. Students with a disability who do not yet have a DRS plan should contact them immediately at disability.uw.edu.

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)[Links to an external site.](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/)[Links to an external site.](#).

Course Outline

1. Introduction to Population (Weeks 1-2)
 1. Population growth and development
 2. Poverty
2. Fertility (Week 3-5)
 1. Fertility & demand for children
 2. Empirical tools
 3. Contraception & sex selection
3. Family Formation (Weeks 6-7)
 1. The economics of marriage
 2. Intra-household decision-making
4. Health and Parental Investments in Children (Week 8-10)
 1. The decline of mortality

2. Parents and child health
3. Child health, schooling, and future outcomes