

Population and Development

Econ 448

Autumn 2020

Dr. Melissa Knox

Email: Message me via Canvas

Live Zoom Meetings:

Thursdays 8:30am-10:20am (other sessions recorded)

Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 3-4pm (Zoom) (subject to change)

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.

The goals of the course are as follows: 1) Students should be able to identify and discuss the issues surrounding the topics listed above; 2) Students should be able to analyze economic models relevant to these issues; and 3) 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.

Course Organization:

This course will combine lecturing on traditional microeconomic theory with in-depth discussion of real-world issues. Due to the special nature of the remote learning quarter, I will post traditional lectures for you to watch asynchronously and host live sessions with some lecture and some discussion. This is not an easy course in terms of the reading and writing required. While I have tried to reduce your reading burden for this quarter, 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, but I will also be expecting you to create an account at Perusall.com (class code: A-KNOX-KJ3U7) and complete assignments associated with the readings there.

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 is strongly recommended. Please discuss your background with me if you are not sure about your preparation.

Evaluation:

You will be graded on 5 problem sets, approximately 35 discussion board/Perusall postings, and either two 5 page papers (for W credit) or one 5 page paper and a final project (but no W credit). There are no exams. Class grades will be calculated as follows:

Problem sets (5 - will randomly choose 2-3 problems to grade for each) – 30%

Discussion board/Perusall postings (drop lowest 1/3) – 20%

Papers/Projects (includes workshopping and writing center review for full credit) – 50%

I expect the class median to be approximately 3.3 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 five 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. I will randomly select two to three problems to grade from each assignment.

Papers/Projects:

We will discuss the paper requirements in depth in the second week of classes. We will work together as a class to brainstorm ideas for our first papers. For the final project (if you choose to do one in lieu of a second paper), your options are an annotated bibliography, a scientific poster or infographic, or a short podcast about a piece of research (two students may create one podcast).

Due Dates:

I will post due dates for problem sets and papers for the sake of timely grading, but I intend to be flexible given the challenges we are all facing this quarter. Please talk to me if you are struggling to keep up.

Accommodations:

Students with a documented disability should contact me about any needed disability accommodations as soon as possible.

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/).

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/).

Course Outline:

1. Introduction & Methodology (Week 1-2)
 - a. Introduction to population
 - b. Population growth and development
 - c. Poverty
 - d. Empirical tools
2. Fertility (Week 3-4)
 - a. Development and fertility
 - b. Contraception & sex selection
3. Family Formation (Weeks 4-6)
 - a. The economics of marriage
 - b. Intra-household decision-making

Paper 1 due

4. Mortality and Health (Week 6-7)
 - a. The decline of mortality
 - b. Hunger, health and productivity
5. Investing in Children (Week 8-10)
 - a. Parents and child health
 - b. Child health, schooling, and future outcomes
 - c. Child labor

Paper 2/Projects due/discussed in Week 11

Questions? Please post to the class discussion board!