

Population and Development

Econ 448

Spring 2020

Live Zoom Meetings:

Mondays 2:30-4:20

Melissa Knox

knoxm@uw.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30 (Zoom)

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, and migration and urbanization.

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 magazine articles 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 this remote learning quarter, I will post traditional lectures 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 magazine articles, and my own knowledge of the subject. All readings will be available in Canvas, either as pdfs or through direct links accessible by UW computers.

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 4 problem sets, 8-10 discussion board posting, and two 5 page papers on a topic that is related to the class. There are no exams. You will get W credit if you complete all assignments and pass the class with a 2.0 or above. Class grades will be calculated as follows:

Problem sets (4) – 30%

Discussion board postings (drop lowest) – 20%

Papers (includes workshopping and peer 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 biweekly problem sets, beginning the first week of class. They will always be due Thursday of the week after they are assigned. You may work with other students, but please submit your own work. I will randomly select two problems to grade from each assignment.

Paper

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, and toward the end of the quarter you will be expected to submit your paper for peer review. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of canvas, this will not be anonymous. Please speak to me if you have any concerns. Your papers will be checked by the university's anti-plagiarism software.

Late/Absence Policy:

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.

Course Outline:

We will follow the general outline below. Please consult the class website before every class to obtain reading assignments and check for any class announcements.

1. Introduction & Methodology (Week 1-2)
 - a. What is economic development?
 - b. Introduction to population
 - c. Population growth and development
 - d. Poverty
 - e. 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
4. Mortality and Health (Week 6)
 - a. The decline of mortality
 - b. Hunger, health and productivity
5. Investing in Children (Week 7-8)
 - a. Parents and child health
 - b. Child health, schooling, and future outcomes
 - c. Child labor
6. Migration & Urbanization (Week 9-10)
 - a. Agricultural surplus and urban migration
 - b. International migration