

Tegan Truitt
George Mason University
S24 ECON 360: Economics of Developing Areas
Time: TR 12-1:15
Place: Planet 122 Fairfax
Office: D134-5, Buchanan Hall, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, Fairfax Campus
Office Hours: M 3-5, T 2-4, by appointment
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Welcome to Economics of Developing Areas! We will address three related topics:

- 1) The theory of economic development;
- 2) Northwest Europe (especially England) as a paradigmatic case of successful development;
- 3) What we will spend most of our time on: the kinds of challenges that have prevented much of the world from developing as successfully as the richest nations.

You should know that I expect you to do what might seem like a lot of reading. A couple of these readings are challenging. If you are willing to invest in your human capital by paying the fixed costs of reading, I expect you'll find the exams (relatively) easy and the course material deeply engaging.

Textbook

Koyama, Mark, and Jared Rubin. *How the World Became Rich*. 2022. Cambridge: Polity Press.

I will also frequently assign other readings; these will be available in PDF format on Blackboard.

Assignments

Readings. There is an assigned reading (roughly 30pp, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter) for each class period.

Midterm exam (10 questions, each worth 2.5 points of your final grade, for a total of 25 points). The midterm will consist of 10 short answer prompts drawn from a question bank. I will add questions to the bank as we go – expect to see about three questions for each class period. I will proctor this exam in person. Closed book, closed notes, handwritten.

Final exam (14 questions, each worth 2.5 points, for a total of 35 points). The final exam will consist of 14 short answer prompts drawn from the same question bank. I will proctor this exam in person. Closed book, closed notes, handwritten.. The final will be comprehensive but weighted heavily toward material covered after the midterm exam.

Reading responses (10 responses, each worth 4 points of your final grade, for a total of 40 points). For ten of the readings throughout the semester, I will ask you to submit a response to two questions: (1) “What is the thesis of the article?” Your response should be exactly one sentence in which you articulate the central claim the author advances. Sometimes the author will make it easy on you; you might be able to just copy and paste a sentence from the paper. Other times it will be more difficult, and you’ll have to do some original summarizing. (2) “What is the main reason the author affirms his thesis?” Your response should be one to three sentences in which you sketch the author’s argument. The object of this exercise is to train your critical reading abilities. I will weight the responses to Qs (1) and (2) equally, and penalize responses that are too long just as heavily as those that are incorrect. **Each reading response is due at class time for the day the reading is assigned.**

In case it was not obvious from the above, the maximum number of points available in this course is 100.

Policies

Grading scale

98-100 = A+

93-97 = A

90-92 = A-

88-89 = B+

83-87 = B

80-82 = B-

78-79 = C+

73-77 = C

70-72 = C-

60-69 = D

< 60 = F

ChatGPT and other chatbots

Use them *judiciously*. Chatbots are an extraordinarily innovative tool that can be useful for research, writing, and workshopping ideas. However, they also tend to deliver the modal view of well-informed internet users – [which is often mistaken about economics](#). Further, chatbots are

not trained on my lectures, your submitted assignments, or recent current events. In the past, students who have naively used (i.e., copied and pasted responses uncritically) chatbots to write assignments for classes I have taught have generally received poor grades.

Office hours

By appointment only. Recognize that I cannot always guarantee my availability if you want to meet with less than 24hrs notice. If times other than as stated at the top of the syllabus are more convenient for you, let me know, and I will be happy to accommodate your schedule. I sincerely hope that many of you will take advantage of office hours. We can meet at my desk: D134-5 in Buchanan Hall, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, Fairfax Campus, and, since I work in an open-concept office, take advantage of the quieter space in the Economics Dept. suite next door. I am also able to make Zoom appointments.

Attendance

I will not take attendance. However, I imagine this course will be very difficult to pass for anyone who is regularly absent.

Late policy

I will not accept late work unless excused **before it is due**.

Enrollment

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.

Special accommodations

If you require any special accommodations, please talk to me during the first week of the term. Please do note that I cannot extend accommodations without the approval of the GMU Office of Disability Services.

Academic integrity

It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows:

“To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.”

More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at <https://oai.gmu.edu>

Global Understanding

This course fulfills GMU's Global Understanding requirement. The goals of the Global Understanding courses consist in the following four learning outcomes:

1. Identify and articulate one's own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.
2. Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.
3. Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.
4. Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

ECON 360 addresses (1) by asking us to consider the tradeoffs between material prosperity and other values. Do the institutions we develop to mitigate scarcity come with moral cost? We address (2) directly by examining the effect of globalization on economic growth. We address (3) indirectly through a detailed examination of global cultures, the extent to which culture is shaped by economic activity, and the extent to which economic activity is constrained by culture. We address (4) by developing tools and heuristics to think about challenges confronting successful economic development.

Schedule of Assignments

Date	Weekday	Reading	Assignment	Notes
1/16/24	Tuesday	-		
1/18/24	Thursday	K+R Ch. 1		
1/23/24	Tuesday	K+R Ch. 2		
1/25/24	Thursday	K+R Ch. 3		
1/30/24	Tuesday	Olson (1993)	Response 1	
2/1/24	Thursday	North and Weingast (1989)	Response 2	
2/6/24	Tuesday	K+R Ch. 4		

2/8/24	Thursday	[Video] Kuran, Baker Institute (2011)		
2/13/24	Tuesday	Boettke, Coyne, and Leeson (2008)		
2/15/24	Thursday	K+R Ch. 5		
2/20/24	Tuesday	K+R Ch. 6	Response 3	
2/22/24	Thursday	Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001)	Response 4	
2/27/24	Tuesday	Albouy (2012)	Response 5	
2/29/24	Thursday	MIDTERM EXAM		
3/5/24	Tuesday			Spring Break!
3/7/24	Thursday			Spring Break!
3/12/24	Tuesday			Prof. Truitt at PCS
3/14/24	Thursday			Prof. Truitt at PCS
3/19/24	Tuesday	K+R Ch. 7		
3/21/24	Thursday	K+R Ch. 8		
3/26/24	Tuesday	K+R Ch. 9		
3/28/24	Thursday	Williamson (2010)	Response 6	
4/2/24	Tuesday	Belova and Gregory (2002)		
4/4/24	Thursday	Frye (2004)		
4/9/24	Tuesday	Shera (2014)	Response 7	
4/11/24	Thursday	Truitt (2023)	Response 8	
4/16/24	Tuesday	Qian and Weingast (1995)	Response 9	
4/18/24	Thursday	Yoo and Steckel (2016)		
4/23/24	Tuesday	Leeson and Harris (2018)	Response 10	
4/25/24	Thursday	K+R Ch. 10 & 11		
4/30/24	Tuesday			Study day
5/2/24	Thursday	FINAL EXAM		