

Economics 360.004 – Economics of Developing Areas
George Mason University - Spring 2021
W – 7:20-10:00 pm: Planetary Hall 131

Instructor: Nathaniel Smith

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Office Hours: via Zoom W 3-4 pm or by appointment

Iteration Date: December 18, 2020

Course Description

This course investigates why some nations are rich while others are poor. Its goal is to provide a framework for exploring that question and examine some economists' answers to it.

The following syllabus is tentative. Any changes will be announced in class and through email; an updated syllabus will then be uploaded to Blackboard. Therefore, if you wish to be absolutely sure of something, look at the syllabus posted on Blackboard.

Course Delivery and Technology Requirements

This course will be delivered in person on Wednesday nights. However, I will collect weekly assignments via Blackboard so access to a computer and the internet for the class are required. Given the current state of the world, there is a chance the course will be moved online. If that were to happen, we will move to a weekly Wednesday Zoom class that will require internet and a computer.

Prerequisites

ECON 103 and ECON 104 are recommended prerequisites for this course. As such, familiarity of basic micro- and macro- economics' principles will be important. If you have not taken either of these courses, please speak with me on the first day. A lack of experience in those classes does not preclude you from success in this one, it simply means there are likely some items we need to discuss to ensure you are in the best position to do so.

In addition, because of the reliance on academic articles as some of the primary resources in the class knowledge of basic mathematical and statistical tools will be helpful, although not necessary. We will discuss the key elements of assigned articles and as a class determine the critical insights in each piece.

Reading and Textbooks

We will cover large portions of each of the following books.

1. *Doing Bad By Doing Good* Christopher Coyne (*DBDG*) ISBN-10 : 0804772282
2. *Anarchy Unbound* Peter Leeson (*AU*) ISBN-10 : 1107629705
3. *Poor Economics* Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo (*PE*) ISBN-10 : 1610390938
4. *The Bottom Billion* Paul Collier (*BB*) ISBN-10 : 0195373383

In addition to portions of the books, each week we will cover academic articles that I will provide links to on Blackboard.

Office Hours

I will be available via Zoom on Wednesdays from 3-4 pm. In addition, I will take appointments via Zoom during regular business hours M-F. Appointments must be made 24 hours in advance.

Grading

Weights

Participation, summaries, questions	15%
Weekly Quizzes	10%
Midterm 1	20%
Midterm 2	20%
Final Project	35%

Scale

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	< 60

Late Policy

Weekly summaries and questions must be submitted by noon Wednesday. No late work will be accepted. All quizzes and exams must be taken in class on the specified day unless a doctor's note is procured. The final project will NOT be accepted after the specified due date.

Class Attendance and Participation

Participation is important for this course. Unless you are sick, you should attend class. You may miss *one* class for any reason once without communicating with me. I will drop the lowest quiz grade, so you will not be hurt by missing one quiz/class. However, even if absent the summary and questions for the week are still due by noon on the day of class. Finally, given the current state of the world, I understand that extenuating circumstances may arise. As long as you contact me in a timely manner, we can find solutions to unforeseen, documented issues.

Quizzes and Midterms

A short (2-3 questions) quiz will be administered during the first 15 minutes of class covering the prior week's material. If you get to class after the quizzes are collected, you will not be allowed to take one. The Midterms will be administered in class and will consist of **T/F/Explain** and **Short Answer** questions. I will allow for up to one-hour of questions and review prior to administering the exam. Once the questions are complete, I will disseminate the exams and you will have until 10 pm to finish.

Final Project

The project is worth 35 percent of your grade and consists of a one-page proposal, a ten-minute presentation, a five-minute "defense", and a seven to ten-page, double-spaced paper.

A one-page double-spaced proposal (1/7th of project grade) is due by email on March 10 or earlier. The earlier you submit your proposed argument/topic of interest, the sooner you can know you have approval to proceed. Next, a ten-minute presentation of your hypothesis and primary evidence will be delivered on April 21 or 28, followed by five-minutes of questions from your peers and me. Finally, your paper will be

due on (or before) May 5 by 7:20 pm. You may email a .doc or .pdf file. To be successful your project must propose an interesting hypothesis and then “test” it. The test may be with statistical evidence, qualitative evidence, case studies, and the like. You may pursue any topic in the field of development economics that you find compelling. Application of the ideas and frameworks discussed in class is expected. I will take questions in class on this as needed.

Important Dates

First Day of Class	Jan. 27, 2021
Last Day to Drop	Feb. 12, 2021
Midterm 1	March 3, 2021
Project Proposal Due	March 10, 2021
Midterm 2	April 14, 2021
Presentations	April 21 & 28, 2021
Final Project Due	May 5, 2021 (or earlier)

Honor Code

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously, and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification. Any plagiarism will result in failure of the course.

Discussion Norm

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. In order to earn the 5+% of your grade that is “participation” it is required that you offer substantive contributions to class weekly. That is, class needs to be affected by your presence.

Special Accommodations

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ds.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs as soon as possible. Any other issues you have during the course should be brought up with me before or after class. Though email is acceptable, I am much more receptive to in person communication.

Communication

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. All course information will be relayed through MasonLive email and Blackboard. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address. I will respond to *all* emails within 24 hours, but only guarantee prompt (within a three-hour window) responses 8-5, M-F. Also, I will be available for questions after class as needed.

Final Thoughts and Advice

This course will be challenging and intellectually stimulating. We will engage the current issues in the economics of development and evaluate them with the tools of economics. Reading prior to class is essential. To keep you accountable, a brief one to two paragraph summary and three questions for discussion are due at noon the day of class. You will submit them via the “Assignments” section of Blackboard. Classes will consist of a quiz, a lecture, and discussion. The discussion is absolutely essential to your progression in the course. This will be when you wrestle with the differing viewpoints presented in the readings and come to a conclusion which you support, as well as develop an argument for its superiority.

Course Outline

Activities and assignments in this course will use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. All readings that are not in the assigned four books (*BB*, *PE*, *DBDG*, *AU*) can be found in the appropriate week’s folder in the “Course Content” section of Blackboard.

Week	Date	Topic and Readings
1	Jan. 27	Introduction, Economics Basics, and Frameworks
2	Feb. 3	Traps: <i>BB</i> C1-5 & <i>PE</i> C1
3	Feb. 10	Institutions: AJR, Rodrik, Glaeser <i>et al.</i> , and North
4	Feb. 17	Property Rights: Demsetz, Murtazashvili, Williamson and Kerekes, and <i>PE</i> C10
5	Feb. 24	Growth Theory: MRU, MRW, Jones, and <i>PE</i> 8
6	Mar. 3	Midterm 1
7	Mar. 10	Economic Historians & Entrepreneurs: <i>PE</i> 9, McCloskey, and Boettke & Coyne
8	Mar. 17	Aid: <i>BB</i> C7 and <i>DBDG</i> Intro & C1-2
9	Mar. 24	Aid: <i>DBDG</i> C3-6 and Nabamita, Leeson, & Williamson
10	Mar. 31	State Capacity: Piano, Johnson and Koyama, and <i>Narrow Corridor</i> Preface & C2
11	Apr. 7	Anarchy: <i>AU</i> C1, 8-10 and Rajan
12	Apr. 14	Midterm 2
13	Apr. 21	Presentations
14	Apr. 28	Presentations
15	May 5	Final Project Due