

# ECON 360-001: Economics of Developing Areas

Patrick Crawford  
pcrawfo6@gmu.edu

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Planetary Hall - 127 — 10:30 am - 11:45 pm (TR)

*Economic growth characteristic of developing countries. Economic development, obstacles to development, policies, and planning. Limited to three attempts.*

## 1 Course Description

The course aims to introduce students to the field of economic development. Why are some countries rich and others poor? What can we do to raise countries from poverty? We will explore both historical development and contemporary theories and practices to try to understand and answer these questions. Because of the significant real world stakes, this is a highly contentious field. My aim is to introduce a broad range of perspectives and give students the tools to analyze the effectiveness of recent policy responses.

**Recommended Prerequisites:** ECON 103 and ECON 104.

## 2 Materials

You should have all the readings for each week done before each lecture. All of the readings will be available online through the Library or be posted on Blackboard. Two of the three books are linked below through the Mason Library and all three should be available for purchase at the Bookstore or Amazon. If you have any trouble getting access to the readings, let me know as soon as possible and I will do my best to provide an alternative.

We will be reading academic articles that contain econometrics. While you are not required to have taken a statistics course for this course, and I will explain findings without delving too far into the weeds. The following links are two good primers for you to review if you need to brush up on general concepts: [A Primer on Linear Regression](#) & [A Primer on Causality](#).

### 2.1 Required Texts

- *The Elusive Quest for Growth* by William Easterly [\[Library – Bookstore\]](#)
- *Poor Economics* by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo [\[Library – Bookstore\]](#)
- *How the World Became Rich* by Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin [\[Bookstore\]](#)

## 3 University and Class Policies

### 3.1 Office Hours

I highly encourage you to meet me over Zoom or in person on campus if you have any questions or concerns. Please [email me](#) to schedule a time. NOTE: You must use your Mason email account for all University communications.

## 3.2 Honor Code

The George Mason University Honor Code is 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 for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

I expect each of you to abide by this code. Any student suspected of any violation will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please visit their [website](#) for more information.

## 3.3 COVID-19 and Safe Return to Campus

All students taking courses with a face-to-face component are required to follow the university's public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage (<https://www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus>). Similarly, all students in face-to-face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check prior to coming to campus. The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system **and students will receive either a Green, Yellow, Red, or Blue email response**. Only students who receive a "green" notification are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. **If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get testing. Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.**

## 3.4 Disability Accommodations

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) — Phone: (703) 993-2474

# 4 Grading

Grading for this course will follow a standard ten-point scale. Your course grade will comprise of five short Discussion Assignments (25%), a Presentation (15%), Participation (5%), a Midterm (20%), and a Final Exam (35%).

**Late Policy:** Every day an assignment is late will drop full letter grade. For example, an A- quality assignment will receive a B- if it is turned in a day late. Exceptions will only be made for emergencies approved in accordance with University policy.

## 4.1 Participation

While you will not be graded on attendance, you are responsible for the readings, lecture material, and any activities we may do for each class. I encourage all students to speak up each class and comment on or ask questions about the readings to demonstrate engagement with the material. This class will be a space for respectful and open discussion.

## 4.2 Discussion Assignments

You will write five 2-3 page (double-spaced) responses throughout the semester discussing a prior reading. Comment on its arguments, compare it to other readings you have done, critique its findings, etc.

Grade	Percent
A+	97 - 100%
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D	60 - 69.9
F	00 - 59.9

### 4.3 Presentation

You will have 10 minutes to briefly explain the economic and institutional background of an underdeveloped country and then discuss a policy response that you believe will help encourage development or what past policies failed to promote growth and why.

### 4.4 Exams

Both exams will be a closed note. Students who show up late will only be given to the end of the exam time to complete the exam, and no student may begin the exam after the first test has been turned in.

- The Midterm Exam is on Thursday, March 9th
- The Final Exam is on Tuesday, May 6th

## 5 Schedule

Please visit the [Registrar's website](#) to see the full University schedule.

- **Week 1:** Introduction, Malthus and Solow  
Easterly, *Elusive Quest for Growth*, Ch 1 & 3  
[MRU: The Solow Model with math](#)
- **Week 2:** Poverty Trap & the Aid Debate  
Easterly (2006) "Reliving the 1950s"  
Banerjee & Duflo, *Poor Economics*, Chs 1 & 2  
Easterly, *Elusive Quest for Growth*, Ch 6
- **Week 3:** Geography & Market Access  
Alvarez-Palau, et al (2020) "Transport and Urban Growth in the First Industrial Revolution"  
Koyama & Rubin, *HtWBR*, Ch 2
- **Week 4:** Health & Infrastructure  
Bleakley (2007) "Disease and Development"  
Banerjee & Duflo, *Poor Economics*, Ch 3
- **Week 5:** Labor & Human Capital  
Banerjee & Duflo, *Poor Economics*, Ch 4  
Easterly, *Elusive Quest for Growth*, Ch 4
- **Week 6:** Institutions  
North (1991) "Institutions"  
North (1968) "Sources of productivity change in ocean shipping, 1600-1850"  
Koyama & Rubin, *HtWBR*, Ch 3
- **Week 7:** *Midterm* (Mar 9)
- **Week 8:** Violence & Social Orders  
Nye (2011) "Why do Elites Permit Reform?"  
Cox, North, & Weingast (2019) "The Violence Trap: A Political-Economic Approach to the Problems of Development"
- **Week 9:** Culture & Religion  
Schultz (2022\*) "Kin Networks and Institutional Development"  
Caicedo (2019) "The mission: Human Capital Transmission, Economic Persistence, and Culture in South America"  
Koyama & Rubin, *HtWBR*, Ch 4
- **Week 10:** State Capacity or Anarchy?  
Leeson, *Anarchy Unbound*, Ch 10  
Johnson & Koyama (2017) "States and economic growth: Capacity and constraints"
- **Week 11:** Conflict & Colonialism  
Broadberry & Wallis (2017) "Growing, Shrinking, and Long Run Economic Performance" (Only pg 1-13)  
Koyama & Rubin, *HtWBR*, Ch 6  
Nunn & Wantchekon (2011) "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa"
- **Week 12:** State of the World Today  
Haggard (2004) "Institutions and Growth in East Asia"  
de la Escosura (2004) "Why Did Latin America Fall Behind?"  
Pinkovskiy & Sala-i-Martin (2014) "Africa is on Time"
- **Weeks 13:** Presentations
- **Weeks 14:** Presentations
- **Week 15:** *Final Exam* (May 6)