

Economics 390S.05
People and Poverty: Policymaking in Theory and in Practice

Professor Xiao Yu Wang

Class

Thursday 1:25-3:55pm
Classes begin: 28 August 2014
Classes end: 5 December 2014
Classroom: Social Sciences 109

Contact information

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Office hrs: Fri 11-noon
and by appointment

1. Goals

The primary goal of this semester-long course is to provide an introduction to a variety of research areas in the economics of development. Throughout the class, emphasis will be placed on the ways in which economic tools, both theoretical and empirical, can be used to better understand, evaluate, and design policies to improve the lives of the poor around the world. Readings will consist of newspaper articles aimed at a general audience, as well as academic research papers. Ideally, you will leave this class feeling better equipped to think about puzzles and problems within as well as outside of development economics.

2. Course requirements

The course will be a mixture of lecture and seminar. Roughly, the second half of each class will be a lecture introducing you to a variety of tools economists use to analyze questions within a particular topic, and the first half of the next class will be devoted to discussion of the assigned homework. Each homework assignment will consist of exercises designed to help you practice using the tools covered in lecture, as well as exercises asking you to apply these tools to the analysis of hypothetical policies.

Grades will depend on three activities:

- (1) Attendance and in-class discussion – 20%: participation in class is absolutely essential, especially as we meet only once per week. The more deeply you engage with the topics we study and with each other, the more successful the class will be. You must obtain permission from me in advance for any absences, with the exception of emergencies. Each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of 20 points from your final point total.

- (2) Homework – 20%: homework will be graded rigorously. Each assignment should be taken seriously, and should demonstrate understanding of the concepts, tools, and content from the lectures and readings.
Please bring **two copies** of your completed homework to class—one to turn in, and one to use for discussion.
- (3) Two take-home exams – 30% each: there will be a take-home midterm, covering the topics from the first half of the semester, and a take-home final, covering the topics in the second half.
The midterm will be distributed at the end of class on Oct. 9. Please email me a copy of your solutions by 1:25pm (the beginning of class) on Oct. 16.
The final will be distributed at the end of class on Nov. 20. Please email me a copy of your solutions by 1:25pm (the beginning of class) on Dec. 5.

Any academic dishonesty is a serious violation of school policy, and will be punished severely. Details can be found at: <http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/conduct/z-policies/academic-dishonesty>

You are not required to purchase any materials (e.g. a textbook) for this class. I will post all readings on the Sakai website. Please ask if you would like to explore any topic further—I am more than happy to recommend relevant books and articles.

3. Class website

All material will be on the Sakai website.

4. Topics covered

The following topics will be covered in this course:

Topic	Lecture	Date
Introduction	1	28-Aug
Risk and Insurance	2	4-Sep
Microcredit	3	11-Sep
Savings	4	18-Sep
New technologies, learning, and entrepreneurship	5	25-Sep
New technologies, learning, and entrepreneurship	6	2-Oct
REVIEW; Take-home midterm	7	9-Oct
Governance, Institutions, and Corruption	8	16-Oct
Governance, Institutions, and Corruption	9	23-Oct

Health	10	30-Oct
Health	11	6-Nov
Behavioral Economics and Neuroeconomics	12	13-Nov
REVIEW; Take-home final	13	20-Nov
NO CLASS - Thanksgiving		27-Nov
	14	5-Dec
Recap		