

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

**Professor Xiao Yu Wang**

**Class**

Thursday 1:25-3:55pm  
Classes begin: 27 August 2015  
Classes end: 3 December 2015  
Classroom: Perkins LINK 059 Seminar Room 1

**Contact information**

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**1. Goals**

The primary goal of this semester-long course is to expose you to a variety of research areas and questions in the economics of development, through lectures, class discussions, and hands-on experience and investigation. 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. The class will culminate in a final research project of your choosing, which you will develop throughout the semester with our guidance, and which you will present to us and your peers at various stages. 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**

This course heavily emphasizes student participation and interaction. The three components of your grade are attendance and in-class discussion, homework, and your research project and presentations. 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. We will discuss the previous week's homework (and any other questions you have) during the first half of each class.

The specific breakdown of your grade is as follows:

- (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 – 30%: 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) One empirical research paper and presentations – 50%: specific guidelines will be distributed in a separate document, but the main criteria will be:
  - (a) Did you ask a creative, feasible question(s) with demonstrable impact?
  - (b) Did you address this question(s) in a rigorous manner?
  - (c) Is your exposition clear, both in your paper and in your presentations?
  - (d) Did you engage with the research of your classmates?

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
<b>Introduction</b>	1	27-Aug
<b>Econometrics I – Tools and Applications</b>	2	3-Sep
<b>Governance, Institutions, and Corruption</b>	3	10-Sep
<b>Governance, Institutions, and Corruption</b>	4	17-Sep
<b>NO CLASS</b>	5	24-Sep

<b>Health</b>	6	1-Oct
<b>Health</b>	7	8-Oct
<b>Econometrics II – Tools and Applications</b>	8	15-Oct
<b>Student Presentations</b>	9	22-Oct
<b>Microcredit</b>	10	29-Oct
<b>Savings/Insurance</b>	11	5-Nov
<b>New Technologies and Entrepreneurship</b>	12	12-Nov
<b>Behavioral Economics and Neuroeconomics</b>	13	19-Nov
<b>NO CLASS – Thanksgiving</b>		26-Nov
<b>Student Presentations</b>	14	3-Dec