

**Research in Development Economics**  
**ECON 496: Senior Seminar**  
**Fall 2024**

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Office: Althouse 115

Class location: Althouse 206

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursday, 12:30-1:30pm, and by appointment

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This class will focus on research in development economics. As the world economy becomes increasingly interconnected, the course will shed light on how both global and local factors influence economic development across different regions. The class would cover key topics in global development, including children's education, child labor, health issues, population and fertility dynamics, household bargaining issues, international migration, effects of climate change, and agricultural practices. Students will explore how various global economic factors, such as economic policies, financial systems, and the roles of international organizations, impact development outcomes across different countries. The course aims to equip students with the analytical tools and knowledge necessary to comprehend and critically evaluate research in economics.

**Course objectives:**

The primary aims of the seminar are to help students develop the following competencies:

1. Develop substantive knowledge on the major development challenges across the world
2. Be able to conduct literature search and write a comprehensive literature review
3. Critically analyze research in economics and be able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of papers and understand nuances
4. Develop research skills, such as articulating an important and relevant question, developing a research strategy, identifying pertinent materials and data, and crafting and supporting an argument.
5. Able to present research where students are able to convincingly convey the information and able to inform the audience of your research
6. Apply some techniques in dialogues across differences, such as master full-spectrum listening when others are speaking and be effective in using questions aimed at understanding when someone presents a view that may challenge student's own belief.

**Course Structure and Requirements:**

This is a senior capstone seminar and as such we are *all* responsible for the learning that takes place in our classroom. Active participation is essential and required to pass the course. Participation is a major component of your grade and as such deserves a bit of discussion here. You are expected to openly talk – sharing your insights derived from the class readings. You are

also expected to listen attentively to your classmates, seeking to understand their ideas and viewpoints, and to respond respectfully and constructively in the classroom.

You should arrive in class fully prepared each week. Much of our time together will take the form of a professional discussion group. You are, in effect, being invited to join the academic conversation using the articles and chapters assigned below. The goal is to better understand the ideas presented but also to go beyond – to analyze and extend these ideas in directions you find compelling or interesting. The group will function as an incubator of ideas – helping each other think through the ideas generated and then push them farther. Some of this will be the basis from which you derive your research project.

You should also expect to personally engage: with me, with your classmates, and with the material itself. You should read assignments for understanding, but also for questions that can help spark discussion. You should strive for an honest interaction with ideas, listening respectfully, offering constructive criticism as well as genuine support, and remaining open minded about ideas and their implications.

This also means we need to be very careful about being inclusive. Always listen first and deeply. Seek to see the viewpoint of another before responding. While we may disagree on politics, policy or even ethics, we must never forget that we are in society together. Do not assume you know what another person's identity or experience is and avoid stereotyping. When in doubt, listen again and ask clarifying questions of understanding. *All viewpoints* are welcome in my classroom. *All persons are valued*. Together, we can create an environment that includes everyone and that benefits us all.

*Moodle:* I will maintain our Dickinson College Moodle webpage linked to your Gateway. You will find links or citations for all class materials here. Most materials for the course will appear here as well. (For example: syllabus, readings, assignments etc.) It is your responsibility to check Moodle often (at least weekly) as I will post materials there.

### **Grading:**

In-class participation – 25%

Discussion leadership (2) – 15%

Individual presentations (2) – 15%

Final research paper – 20%

Literature writeups – 8%

Research peer review (2) – 7%

Comments/questions following presentations – 3%

Speaker writeups – 7%

There is no written final exam. There is a semester research project in lieu of an exam. The final research project is due on Dec 21 on Moodle.

**In Class Participation** – As participation is a *major component* of your grade, I want to be clear about expectations. You will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- You arrive each week having **completed all assigned readings**.
- You bring with you your **materials, annotated, and with notes and written questions** to help in the discussions.
- Remember, we meet only once per week. Missing class not only means *you* did not join that class, it also means you were not there to contribute to the learning of your classmates. Note: for excused absences, you will be required to submit notes/discussion questions prior to the class meeting time with the exception of medical emergencies (where make up work will likely be assigned).
- You must **arrive on time**. It is highly disrespectful to me and your classmates to arrive late. If you must step out of class outside our regular breaks, please do so very quietly and return as soon as possible.
- You are expected to **actively engage in conversations**. You are encouraged to bring in outside ideas or things you have learned in other classes. You are expected to prompt discussion by asking questions or posing thought experiments. You are expected to be respectful (of your classmates, their ideas, and their honest attempts to engage with the material) at all times.
- Personal reflections and opinions are welcome. However, at this level of discourse, you are expected to provide more. Base your comments on the ideas from the readings, past or current. In other words, it is up to you to demonstrate that you have read all assigned readings.

We meet only once per week. This is our time together. It is extremely disrespectful to text or use social media during class or make a regular habit of excusing yourself to attend to other things (phone calls, etc.) When in class, your entire focus should be on class.

Some ideas to think about as you are trying to think of questions for the class and for the readings:

**Discussion Leadership** – Throughout the semester you will be paired with two or three other students. Together, you will be responsible for presenting the articles for the week and leading discussion. During class, this group will be expected to be very familiar with the materials and prepared to ask leading and open-ended questions. They will be responsible for prompting discussion should it lag, ideas for extending the ideas, and thoughts on connecting the ideas of prior classes where appropriate. Each group should send me the discussion questions at least two days ahead of time. You should expect to help lead discussion twice this semester.

Discussion leaders will be evaluated on their preparedness, the thoughtfulness of their discussion questions, their ability to foster lively discussion and healthy, respectful debate, their ability to tie this work into earlier materials where appropriate, and their handling of the class.

All students, discussion leaders and participants, should consider the following when preparing for class:

- What are the **main points** of each article? How are these related to materials from earlier in the semester? Do they relate to other areas of knowledge you possess?
- What was **interesting, strange, or revealing** in the readings? What merits further discussion with the class?
- Do you understand their **methodology**? If not, feel free to raise that issue in class. Did you find the study's methodology sound?
- How are these ideas **relevant to issues faced today**? What implications might these ideas have for public policy?
- **Points of disagreement** - Did you feel anything was missing? What would you have liked to learn more about? What are the potential areas for future research? Is there anything you disagree with?

Note: As discussion leaders, your work will form the bulk of our time together on that day. Plan to spend as much as 45 minutes discussing your materials with the class. This is a long time to lead the class so let me offer some tips:

- **Break things up.** Likely you will need to present some sort of review of the material first. This 'lecture' style needs to be mixed with large and small group participation, in class activities or other methods of engaging the material.
- Come prepared with **discussion questions**. Have them on a slide (or several) to use during the class time if you would like. This way you can break the class into smaller groups and the question/prompt will be available for reference. Alternatively, you may want to print some materials out.
- When you break the class up, consider rotating through the class groups to **assist or guide** as needed. Also, be certain you take a moment before 'turning them loose' to ask if the prompt is clear.
- Be open to the chance that a group will take your prompt in an unexpected direction. Ask clarifying questions and engage the new ideas as best you can. Discussion is sometimes a messy thing – that's ok! **See where it goes.**

A minute or two of **silence is fine**. New ideas take a moment. Be patient. If the class does not respond immediately, give them a few moments. If there still isn't a good response, try rephrasing your prompt. You might even ask the class to free write privately for a few minutes

before responding to the group. Or, you might break the class into pairs to discuss the topic then share with the larger group.

**Individual Presentations** – There will be two individual presentation of your own research. For the first presentation, likely in the second week of class, you will be asked to summarize a topic in development economics for your peers. The second presentation, likely towards the end of the semester, would be on the research that you have been doing as part of your final research project. More guidelines will be provided in your class for both types of presentations.

All students are expected to attend these sessions and fully participate.

You will be evaluated on how clearly and concisely you present your ideas, how professional your presentation is, and how useful your teaching aids are (your handouts or slides, etc.)

Students who are NOT presenting must still attend. You will be evaluated on how well (and respectfully) you listen and on your responses to the discussion questions or any questions of your own that you pose.

**Final Research Paper** – Each student should write a research paper on a topic of choice. The goal is to apply what we are learning to a topic in development economics. You should feel free to use secondary data for your own analysis or do your synthesis on a topic. In fact, I strongly encourage everyone to work with data to conduct their analysis. The bar for grades will be significantly higher for research that does not involve data work as working with data forces you to manage and learn about different challenges.

Students will develop a working thesis, brainstorm with peers, receive research guidance from a librarian, revise their thesis and create a draft for peer review. (Students will, of course, also peer review another class member's work.)

The final paper should be 10-12 pages of text, double spaced and with one-inch margins. In addition to this page length, each paper should include a formatted bibliography and in-text citations (APA Style) should be used as needed. Please include page numbers. The goal is to create a professional level, albeit brief, article using ideas from development economics. I am looking for an article that might be submitted to a journal – not a standard summary paper. Focus on analysis – apply what we are learning rather than merely summarizing what others have said. You are expected to make a contribution to the professional discourse on the topic! I strongly recommend use of the writing center for this project as it is a major component of your grade.

You will lose points if you fail to complete any of the intermediate steps (turning in a thesis, submitting a draft, participating in the peer review, for example).

**Literature Review** – For the literature review, students will have to choose from one of several pre-selected topics that the professor will share ahead of time. The emphasis would be on the quality of the literature review conducted (i.e. did you cover every source), the conciseness with which the writeup was written, and the quality of the writing. The literature review writeups should be 3 pages long, double spaced with one-inch margin, and with 12 point Times New Roman font.

**External Speaker Writeups** – There will be some research talks to aid the learning of this course. You will have to complete write-ups on four external speaker events who will be visiting the college. For each writeup, you will have to explain the research question of the presenter and also explain the main findings in detail. It should be 300 or more words in length. You have to submit the write-up on Moodle within a week of the talk.

**Research peer review** – You will have to critically peer review the writing of your classmates. More guidance on peer review will be provided in class.

**Comments/Questions following presentation** – Following the research presentation of your classmates, you will have to provide constructive comments or ask questions on your peer's research which can potentially help them improve their research.

### **General Classroom Policies:**

**Respect:** I have mentioned repeatedly that I expect each of us (myself included) to respect the people and ideas we encounter in this class. Any student who is making an effort to engage with a new idea or express a thought of their own deserves our utmost care and consideration. Remember, sometimes we need to 'try out' an idea before we can develop our own way of thinking on the issue clearly. It is an element of academic endeavor that our ideas are initially not well formed or thought out. Be kind and patient to yourself and others as we all try out new ideas.

I will do my best to listen to you, to teach effectively, to honor our time together, and to share in your process of learning. In turn, I expect each of you to attend classes, keep personal discussions to a minimum, use technology for class related (and appropriate) materials only, to silence your phones and avoid their use during class as much as possible, and to actively engage in the class and encourage others as they do the same.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity will be taken very seriously in this course. Students who violate College rules on scholastic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action, which include the possible failure of the course and/or dismissal from the College. For a laughably brief take on this complicated issue, follow these guidelines: 1) do your own work; clear any collaborations ahead of time and give full credit; 2) cite your sources fully and explicitly; and 3) for quotations, use quotation marks and cite fully; for summary or paraphrase, cite fully and explicitly at the end of the relevant paragraph or sentence. For further details, please read

carefully and be familiar with the Community Standards on the Dickinson College website [https://www.dickinson.edu/download/downloads/id/963/community\\_standards](https://www.dickinson.edu/download/downloads/id/963/community_standards)

### **The Dickinson College Plagiarism Policy:**

To plagiarize is to use without proper citation or acknowledgment the words, ideas or original research of another. Whenever one relies on someone else for phraseology, even for only two or three words, one must acknowledge indebtedness by using quotation marks and giving the source, either in the text or in a footnote. When one borrows facts which are not matters of general knowledge--including all statistics--one must indicate one's indebtedness in the text or footnote. When one borrows an idea or the logic of an argument, one must acknowledge indebtedness either in a footnote or in the text. When in doubt--footnote.

Most plagiarism is unintentional, the result of ignorance or inaccurate note-taking. Your paper, however, cannot be evaluated by guesses about your intention; it can only be evaluated as it exists. Whether the plagiarism is intentional or inadvertent, the penalty is severe. If you have questions, consult with your instructor or the writing center.

### **Accommodations for Disabilities:**

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations.

To learn more about available supports, go to [www.dickinson.edu/ADS](http://www.dickinson.edu/ADS) or email [access@dickinson.edu](mailto:access@dickinson.edu).

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please follow the guidance at [www.dickinson.edu/AccessPlan](http://www.dickinson.edu/AccessPlan) for disclosing the accommodations for which you are eligible and scheduling a meeting with me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your accommodations and finalize your Access Plan. If test proctoring will be needed from ADS, remember that we will need to complete your Access Plan in time to give them at least one week's advance notice.

### **Classroom Technology and Recording:**

I understand that we live in a digital world and that many of us prefer to take notes or view documents on a screen. Having said this, I also understand that the internet, social media and other technology driven distractions can make focusing and learning very difficult.

Thus, I have a technology policy. You may have and use a laptop (or similar device) in class with the following provisions:

- You are to **view only class related and publicly appropriate materials**. Any complaint from anyone and this privilege will be revoked. If I see you 'browsing' or checking email during a presentation, your right will be revoked.
- **Turn off all notifications** such as email or social media. This is our time together. You can view that Snapchat (or whatever is current and 'in') after class!
- **Under no circumstances should our class be recorded without prior and explicit permission**. If you have an accommodation for this, see me first!

I reserve the right, at any time, to end this policy and ban technology from the classroom if I feel it is not supporting our goals. Please, use your technology responsibly.