Foundations of Economics for Sustainable Development
Fall 2020 – Provisional

Instructor: Dr. Renata Serra
Office: 421 Grinter Hall
Email: rserra@ufl.edu
Credits: 3

Office hours: available via Zoom upon request
Sections: AFS6307 (19F1) – LAS6938 (363B)
Times/location: R P2-4, hybrid (TBD)

Course description and goals
This course is an introduction to the main topics and debates in development economics. Specifically targeted at graduate students with limited to no background in economics, the course allows students to appreciate the widespread application of economic ideas and concepts to sustainable development problems around the world. It examines economic development challenges and policies at the level of whole countries and regions; as well as issues at sector and household level. The focus is less on studying the theoretical models and more on how theories and concepts apply in practical contexts and how different factors shape economic decisions at both macro and micro levels. Particular attention is paid to the problems of sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America – but students are welcome to explore other regions as well including North America.

The curriculum has been updated to reflect current debates about global inequalities. There are six core learning units, which are deemed to be neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, and students will have the opportunity to explore other areas of interest as part of their individual project. The given assignments have the purpose of enhancing understanding of core topics, as well as providing the opportunity to pursue student’s own interests. This course fulfills the core economics requirement for MDP students, but is open to any interested graduate student.

Class format - DELIVERY MODALITIES UNDER COVID-19
Given the uncertainties related to the evolution of the pandemic in Alachua County and Florida, this course will be hybrid with a percentage of in-person contact varying between 1% and 20%. The bulk of the course will be conducted remotely with both synchronous and asynchronous components. The in-person component will take place in accordance with guidelines from the Alachua county health department and the University of Florida (including mask wearing) and may involve meetings in outdoor spaces.

The course will consist of lectures, group discussions and hands-on activities and will use Zoom, Google groups and other platforms to enhance student learning and participation in a remote modality. Every effort will be made to foster a safe and collaborative learning environment. For these efforts to be successful, it is essential that each student takes responsibility for reading the materials according to the calendar, participating in all activities, and contributing eagerly and actively to both individual and collective learning and progress.
Reading

Two textbooks are required (we will refer to them by the title initials):


All other required reading will be available on the course page on e-Learning (Canvas, *Modules* section), and can be accessed through [http://lss.at.ufl.edu](http://lss.at.ufl.edu), with your Gatorlink username and password.

Student learning outcomes

By the end of this course successful students will have gained:

1. Ability to use and apply relevant economic concepts to the analysis and understanding of key economics questions, including those related to the determinants of income and wealth; the root of poverty and inequality; and the differentiations due to gender, race, and other individual/group markers
2. Ability to use and interpret key economic development indicators, and a basic understanding of quantitative data analysis
3. Ability to distinguish and analyze the complex factors affecting individual/household decision-making as well as the role of policies and political economy issues
4. Experience with conducting applied research through their an individual or group project (including involvement in existing research projects at UF).

Grading and Assignments

The learning components and related assignments are briefly described below. Detailed instructions along with specific requirements and grading criteria will be provided on the Canvas course website.

- **Engagement and participation (15% of total grade)**: You will be involved in a number of small tasks (presentations, discussion postings, short activities) through which you will show your commitment to the course and contribution to class learning.

- **Unit-based assignments (each worth 10% for a total of 60% of total grade)**: There will be one assignment at the end of each of the six learning units. Such assignments can take various forms (short paper, discussion posting, data exercise) and are meant to help you to gain practice in the analysis and application of the concepts studied.

- **Research Deliverable (25%)**: A major assignment for this course is a deliverable whose modalities and area of interest are chosen by each student in accordance with the instructor. Deliverables may take different forms, such as literature review, data analysis and write up, development of a survey or research instrument, etc. You will be given a number of options out of which to choose. Alternatively, you may develop your own deliverable as part of your ongoing research agenda. More instructions to follow.

The final grade will be a weighted average of grades for individual course components. The grading scale is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>Tot %</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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CLASS TIME SCHEDULE
Reading is compulsory and needs to be completed before each class. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this schedule during the semester.

Unit 1: Introduction to key concepts and application to the Global North and South

- **Week 1**: Income, Wealth and Health – How do we identify rich and poor countries? What are the main differences between the Global North and South?
- **Week 2**: Poverty and Inequality – How do people at the bottom fare – within the Global North and South? Why is inequality bad? How do inequality gaps look like along racial and gender lines?
- **Week 3**: Resilience – What is resilience: at the level of individuals/households and at community/societal level? How do crises affect well-being? How have countries and families coped with the COVID-19 pandemics?

Unit 2: Economic Growth, Economic Development and De-Growth

- **Week 4**: What is development economics? What is the difference between economic growth and development? What are the main development indicators and how do they compare across countries?
- **Week 5**: The experience of developing countries in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century – What are the benefits of economic growth? What are the implications of structural change? Is industrialization essential for developing the economy? What is the role of policy?
- **Week 6**: Critiques to the economic growth model – what is a Green economy? What do proponents of De-growth say? What is the application in real contexts (Buen Vivir)?

Unit 3: Primary economic sectors: Agriculture and Livestock

- **Week 7**: Agriculture/livestock – what is the role of agriculture/livestock for development and food security? Should people access food through own-production or through the market? What is the role of markets?
- **Week 8**: Enabling Policies for Agriculture/Livestock: What are the drivers of improved policy interventions for increasing farmers well-being and food security? What collection of interests and political economy conditions are more likely to lead to improved farmers? What is the role of farmer organizations and collective action?

Unit 4. Behavioral change at household and community level

- **Week 9**: Introduction to behavioral economics: What does it mean that we are often not rational? What is the role of social norms in decision-making? Application of these tools to one of the following: parent’s fertility decisions; household education choices; Conditional Cash Transfers.
- **Week 10**: Application of behavioral economics to saving, credit and investment decisions: Why do poor people not save enough? Why don’t credit and insurance institutions serve poor people? What are the constraints to optimal investment and successful entrepreneurship?
Unit 5. Women’s economic empowerment (WEE)

Week 11: Understanding gender differences and their intersections with other individual and group characteristics – Readings from Feminist economics in a variety of contexts.

Week 12: Women’s economic empowerment: what does it mean and how can it be measured? Why do all major development agencies aim to enhance WEE? How do they attempt to do it?

Unit 6. The role of international institutions and relationships

Week 13: The international economic order and the development architecture: The World Bank, IMF and the UN agencies: what are they and what they do? Are they going to stay?

Week 14: Does foreign aid contribute to economic development? What do the critics of foreign aid say? What are the perspectives from leading intellectuals and grass-root organizations in aid receiving countries?

Week 15: What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)? What are the positive and negative effects of FDI on recipient countries? Who benefits and who loses?

University Policies

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with University policies.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sscr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with their general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The Counseling and Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Contact information: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575. University Police Department: 392-1111.

Students with Disabilities Act

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.