Economics 450 – Advanced Topics in Economic Development – Spring 2020
Professor Jeff Bookwalter
TTH 9:30-10:50, LA 105

Contact: LA 405, 243-4667, jeff.bookwalter@mso.umt.edu
Office Hours: TTH 2-3, W 9-10. If those times are not convenient, drop by or make an appointment.

Course materials: Gerard Roland, Development Economics
Eric Henson, et al., The State of Native Nations
Numerous readings and other materials available on the course Moodle page

General Description: This is a course in development economics structured for upper-level undergraduate students and graduate students in economics. We will use economic theory and empirical evidence to examine processes of development and the challenges faced by individuals in poor countries and low income groups even in rich countries.

Students who successfully complete this course will understand:
• Global distribution of income and comparative growth rates
• Challenges in measuring poverty and inequality
• Patterns of population growth and determinants of demographic transition
• Patterns and drivers of structural change
• Role of institutions and corruption in development and underdevelopment
• Relationship between development, political institutions and conflict
• Role of credit in persistence of poverty
• Current approaches to evaluating the impacts of development interventions
• Theory and evidence on interventions to improve health and education in poor countries
• Some of the challenges to economic development in Indian Country

Email List and Moodle Page: Students at UM are automatically assigned an email address in the following format: firstname.lastname@umontana.edu. I will use these email addresses regularly to send out current events readings, make class announcements, provide evaluations of your work and for other things as the need arises. There is a course Moodle page where readings, assignments and announcements will be posted.

Exams: There are a total of three exams. All will be a mix of short answer, essays and problems. The final exam is comprehensive but emphasizes material from the last third of the course. Except for documented emergencies or University excused absences, make-up exams are not given.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 18th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 31st</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Thursday, May 7th, 8-10am</td>
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**Grading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework Assignments and Quizzes</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation on Discussion Days</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Group Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Midterm Exams</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Students with Disabilities:** This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the modification process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at [http://www.umt.edu/disability](http://www.umt.edu/disability).

**A Word on Cheating and Plagiarism:** Please do not do cheat. Chances are you’d get away with it, but if you don’t the consequences are dire. All students are expected to abide by the University of Montana Student Conduct Code. Any violators of the Student Code of Conduct will be subject to punishment as outlined in the Student Code. For more information on the Student Code of Conduct please consult the following website: [http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)

**Econ 450 – Spring 2020 – Graded Assignments**

**Topic Assignments**

During most weeks, in addition to textbook readings, we will read a journal article on the topic at hand. For example, in the third week of class, we will look evaluating development using happiness and life satisfaction data. All of us will read:

Daniel Kahneman and Alan Krueger, “Developments in the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being?”

The group assigned to lead the week’s discussion will choose one other article. At least one week before we start the discussion, the group will submit at least three substantial journal articles to me (email links are best). The group and I will choose one of them and once approved, I will post them on the class website. Everyone needs to have read and understood and thought about them before class. Given the depth and breadth of all of the topics we cover, I’m happy to help groups narrow or choose good articles.

Here are some guidelines for choosing good articles. Pick articles that are accessible to most of your classmates and avoid the most technical or theoretical. All senior economics majors should be able to read and mostly understand empirical articles. Do not choose articles from the *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*. These articles are too short to provide much discussion. Articles in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* or the *Journal of Economic Literature*, while usually fairly long, are not overly technical and often generate good discussion.

In addition to choosing articles, it is the group’s responsibility to facilitate a good discussion. I’d recommend (but not require) that you put together some questions you’d like people to think about as they read. In addition, groups have at times successfully used video or audio resources to help the discussion along.
An important part of this course is showing up and actively participating in the discussion. It is not enough to simply attend. On days where we discuss articles, I assign each student a grade for their contribution. From lowest to highest the ratings are: Unexcused Absence, Excused Absence, Present with no contribution, Minimal Contribution, Normal Contribution, and Excellent Contribution. To get a sense of the evaluation scale, a normal contribution would be adding to the discussion in a way that demonstrates that you have read the required material and are able to take that knowledge and contribute to the class understanding.

**Study Question Assignments**

Due Date: One week after the last day you led the discussion of the economic development topic

In your group, come up with 5 potential essay questions that might arise from your readings, the textbook and subsequent class discussion. Make sure the questions require having read and understood the relevant papers and background materials from the textbook. Each person in the group is responsible for answering one of the questions in detail. Make sure that they are broad enough to require some knowledge beyond what is contained in the specified readings. The answer should be at least one single-spaced page. If you can’t fill a page, it’s not a good question.

They need to be submitted in two ways. First, choose one member of your group to merge the five questions and answers into a single Word file using the same fonts, margins, etc. Email me the file so I can look it over and circulate it to the class. Second, each person should hand in a hard copy of the single question they answered so that I can grade and return it.

**Development Exercises**

During the semester, there will numerous, fairly short assignments. These range from data exercises to short answer and essays. You will always have at least a week’s notice.

**Out of Class Assignments**

Each student must attend (and write up a one page synopsis and response to) two relevant events on economics, broadly defined. These activities might include approved brown-bag discussions, evening lectures, films and others. I will keep you informed of relevant events and their dates as they are scheduled. Please let me know if you come across things that seem relevant and I can announce those as well. Better write-ups will demonstrate the ability to take economic theory and practice and apply them to the topic at hand.