Course Overview

The primary policy question in international development is: “How effective are efforts to enhance well-being in developing countries?” This question is relevant at the aggregate level, as countries decide how much of their GDP to direct toward foreign aid, but also for individual projects, as organizations allocate scarce resources across projects. This course examines this question, and provides an overview of international development policy in the process.

We begin with a discussion of the history of global income disparities and development policy, with particular attention to the role played by international institutions and non-governmental organizations. In the process, we consider case studies of successful and unsuccessful aid projects. We then turn to the empirical literature on the effectiveness of various policies, such as: family planning programs, infrastructure development projects, human capital interventions, conditional cash transfers, property rights reforms, and the alleviation of credit constraints (i.e. micro-finance and micro-insurance). We review concepts from the program evaluation literature, as necessary, to understand this literature. We also pay special attention to corruption, intra-household bargaining, spillover effects, and incomplete markets, and how these concepts impact the optimal design of international development policy.

Class Meetings

Classes will be held Fridays from 10:00 to 11:55 a.m. in Grainger 2175. My office hours are Wednesdays from 10:30-12 in Social Science 7321 (but I’d recommend scheduling an appointment or just chatting with me after class so you’re not competing directly with the 170 students enrolled in my other class).

Evaluation

Your overall grade for the course will be based on four components:

- Class Participation (10%): You are expected to attend class and participate in class discussion. Classes will have a lecture format, but these lectures will be far more interesting if everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the topic at hand.

- Class Reading Assessments (30%): To promote discussion, it is important for everyone to complete assigned readings before lecture. As a policy practitioner, it is also
vital to be able to read articles and critically assess their quality. To encourage this kind of reading, everyone is required to submit one criticism and one question about each assigned reading. Beginning the second week of classes, these should be uploaded to Learn@UW (in pdf format) each Thursday by 8:00 PM.

• Final Exam (30%): There will be a “take-home” final examination at the end of the term. We will discuss the exact timing on the first day of class.

• Book Review (30%): Write a short review (4-5 pages) of a popular press development policy book which you have not previously read. The review is due Friday, April 1. You may pick a book from the following list or feel free to submit another book for approval:


Course Webpage

Lecture notes, readings, and other course materials will be posted on Learn@UW: https://learnuw.wisc.edu/

Course Outline

This section provides a tentative roadmap of what topics we will be covering each week. Mandatory readings are marked with an asterisk and will be posted each week on the course webpage. Articles marked with a plus are worth skimming if you have time. The remaining articles will be referenced in class, so I’m providing you with citations in case you’d like to explore any of these topics in greater depth.

Background Articles: Policy Evaluation Methodology


**Week 1 - Overview of the Problem**


Rosling, Hans (2010). “200 countries, 200 years, 4 minutes”. British Broadcasting Corporation. (Available at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00cgkfk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00cgkfk).)

**Week 2 - The Role of International Institutions and Non-Governmental Institutions; Foreign Aid Effectiveness; Possible Solutions**


**Week 3 - Physical Capital & Infrastructure**


Week 4 - Human Capital (Education)


Week 5 - Human Capital (Health)


**Week 6 - Family Planning**


**Week 7 - Conditional Cash Transfers**
Week 8 - Credit Constraints (Micro-Finance)


Week 9 - Credit Constraints (Micro-Insurance)


Week 10 - Property Rights


Week 11 - Migration and Brain-Drain


Week 12: Topics on Women’s Empowerment: Missing Women, Intra-Household Bargaining, and Increasing Political Engagement


Week 13 - Conflict


Week 14 - Corruption


Week 15 - Cross-Country Evidence: Geography, Natural Resources, & Institutions


