

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Introduction to Economics

SOSC 5720 · 3 Credits · Fall 2026 · Tuesday, 7:00–9:50 pm

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Office Hours: posted on Canvas (also available by appointment)

Course description

This course studies economic reform and development in China, the largest developing economy in the world. We ask what prevented sustained development before 1978, how the post-1978 reforms produced three decades of rapid growth, and what problems remain unresolved in China's development model today. The course combines institutional analysis with close reading of empirical papers; it does not require advanced econometrics, though basic familiarity with regression analysis is helpful.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

ILO1. To introduce students to histories and theories of China's economic development

ILO2. To introduce students to research analysis and empirical works about China's economic development

ILO3. To familiarize students with modern statistical and econometric methods to investigate research topics.

Assessment

- Class participation (10%)
- In-class discussion (10%)
- Two assignments (20%)
- Mid-term presentation (20%)
- Final presentation (20%)
- Final paper (20%)

Assessment Tasks: ILO Mapping, Sub-Rubrics, and Rules

Assessment Task	ILOs	Requirements and Rules
Class participation (10%)	ILO3	Collected from in-class paper discussion and recordings.
In-Class Content Quizzes (10%; best 2 of 3 count)	ILO1, ILO2	Two 20-minute paper question discussion on lecture content, given in 20 minutes of class, and submitted in person. You must be physically present and submit your own quiz in your own name. Your best two of three scores count (5% each); the lowest is dropped automatically. Because the lowest is dropped, there are no make-up content quizzes — a single missed quiz is simply the one that is dropped. The three quizzes also count toward Attendance, so each does double duty: content marks plus an attendance check.
Data Report (10%)	ILO2	Choose ONE data on the Canvas Page “data list” and assign your name. The choice is exclusive. Please make your choice early. You can also search for data by yourself. The data can be used for final paper.

Assessment Task	ILOs	Requirements and Rules
	ILO3	Format: 5-10 pages including graphs, figures, and references A4 size, 1-inch margins, 12-point, Times New Roman font, 1.25 spaced, Structure: -2.5%, summarize data source and structure, including key variables, time horizon, geographic horizon, data source or collection methods. -5%, assessment of data quality (missing values, outlier, values of variables). summary statistics and interpretations of statistics. -5%, analysis and thoughts of the data, including trend, spatial distribution, frequency, variations. If you want to conduct basic regression and interpretation of the results, it also works.
Referee Report (10%)	ILO1, ILO2	Individual work. Choose ONE paper from the Canvas reading list and register your name; choices are exclusive and first-come, so choose early. Format: three pages; A4; 1-inch margins; 12-point Times New Roman; 1.25 line spacing; over-length or mis-formatted reports are penalized. Sub-rubric (10%): – 2.5% – accurate summary (research question, data, methods, conclusion); – 5% – critical assessment of the evidence, data, and methods; – 2.5% – policy implications, extensions, or follow-up studies. A required GenAI memo must state exactly how any GenAI tool was used.
Midterm (data analysis) Presentation (20%)	ILO1, ILO2	Data analysis presentations are held across Weeks 7 or 8, graded individually per presenter. Presentation slots are assigned on Canvas. Sub-rubric per presenter (20%): – 5% – clear, independent delivery (no reading from notes or a script); – 5% – time management (finish within the assigned limit); – 10% – conveys the proposed data well (source, statistics, trend, distribution, and your thoughts).
Final Presentation (20%)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	Paper presentation was held in Week 12 or 13. Presentation slots are assigned on Canvas. Sub-rubric (20%): – 5% – clear, independent delivery (no reading from notes or a script); – 5% – time management (finish within the assigned limit); – 10% – conveys the study well (story, method, results).
Final Paper (20%)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	Research paper. No more than 30 pages including references, tables, and charts; A4; 1-inch margins; 12-point Times New Roman; 1.25 line spacing. Structure: Abstract (1 page, 100–150 words); Introduction (2–3 pages); Literature Review (2–3 pages); Data; Method; Results; References (see libguides.ust.hk/basic-citation/how-to-cite); and a required GenAI memo. Anti-gaming: work submitted after the deadline is not accepted (see Submission & Late Work). Fabricated data or results, or undisclosed reuse of another source's text or code, is academic misconduct.

Grading Rubrics

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of econometric methods, expertise in problem-solving, and significant creativity in thinking. Exhibits a high capacity for data assessment, empirical analysis, presentation and collaboration, going beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the models and causal inference, competence in problem-solving, and the ability to analyze and evaluate issues. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to work effectively with others.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of causal inference, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.

In-class paper discussion

Every teaching session includes a 30-40 minute in-class paper discussion: 20 minutes to read a one-page handout at your seat, followed by 20 minutes in which the instructor walks through the paper's story, method, data, and results and takes questions. These papers are separate from, and not on, the formal referee-report reading list (Reading_List.pdf); they were chosen because each one tests, with real data, one specific mechanism from that session's lecture or classic development stories.

Communication and Policy

- Late delivery of due items will NOT be accepted! Refer to notifications for changes in classes or tasks.
- Students are advised to consult on the feasibility of their group project with TA. Feedback on group work will be provided (e.g., feasibility, strengths, areas for improvement) by the TA.
- Students seeking clarification or further feedback, including grading, should consult the instructor or teaching assistant within one week of receiving the grade.

Regrading Policy

If you want to ask for a reevaluation of your work, please submit your justifications in writing within one week of the return of that graded exam to the class. We will reassess your entire work using the copies we saved for regrading. I will consider regrading requests only when they may affect the final scores. Please note that the entire exam, not just the part in question, is subject to re-grade. Thus, your total score may increase or decrease.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Honor System

I trust that every student in this course will comply with all the provisions of the honor code. You must “pledge” and sign your name on each exam and quiz.

In the unlikely event that one of you observes an incidence of cheating or dishonesty, I expect you to contact an Honor Advisor immediately. All alleged honor violations brought to my attention will be forwarded to the Honor Committee. If, in my judgment, it is beyond a reasonable doubt that a student has committed an honor violation on an exam, that student will receive an immediate grade of zero for that exam, regardless of any subsequent action taken by the Honor Committee.

Reading and Data List

Required reading and data list: a selection of articles and data will be uploaded to the canvas website each week along with discussion questions.