

SOSC 5440: Economics of Development
Division of Social Science, HKUST
Spring 2025/2026

Instructor: Sangyoon Park

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4pm

Lecture: Tuesday 9:00-11:50am at Room 2126A

Teaching Assistant: TBA

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Course Description

This course covers the microeconomics of development, focusing on empirical applications. Topics include health, education, gender inequality, behavior, firms, agriculture, environment, and institutions. Lectures will concentrate on the rigorous application of empirical methods to examine important questions in development economics. Students will complete empirical exercises and present recent journal articles.

Course Materials

Textbooks: There is no required textbook for this course. However, you may consider the following as useful references:

- Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*, New York, NY, USA: PublicAffairs, 2011.
- Joshua Angrist and Jörn-Steffen Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

In addition, there will be a reading list comprising of peer-reviewed papers in the literature. Students will be expected to have read the assigned papers prior to lectures. Most readings are available in electronic form on our course website in Canvas.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Establish critical understanding of the development economics literature
2. Comprehend major empirical methodologies in development economics
3. Integrate academic research with real-world issues and applications
4. Effectively communicate research findings

Assessment Tasks/Evaluation Plan

Assessment will be determined by the following formula:

	Percent of Final Grade
Class participation	5%
Referee report	15%
Paper presentation	20%
Data analysis	20%
Research proposal	40%

- Class attendance and participation: Class attendance is mandatory. You are responsible for all materials presented in lecture. Class participation (e.g., asking questions or answering questions) is also highly recommended.
- Referee report: A referee report should be 2-4 pages long, double spaced. A list of papers for the referee report will be circulated in class during the course of the semester. Some helpful guides on how to write a referee report are available here: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.31.1.231>. Referee report should be submitted through the course website on the due date (TBD) until 5pm. Late submissions will not be accepted. This is an individual assignment. Students should submit their own work.
- Paper presentation: In-class presentation and discussion of an assigned paper for approximately 30 minutes. You are to work in groups (group size determined based on class size). Presentations will be scheduled throughout the semester.
- Data analysis: There will be 2 take-home data analysis assignments in which you will be asked to conduct empirical analysis (i.e., replicating study results) using Stata or R. This is an individual assignment. Students should submit their own work.
- Research proposal: You have to develop an original research proposal that examines a real-world question related to topics in development economics. You are to work in groups (group size determined based on class size). You will submit an interim report by March 31st (5% of total grade), present your proposal in class on May 5th (15%) and submit a final manuscript during the final exam period (date TBD).

Academic Conduct

The University regulations on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Also, please check the University Statement on academic integrity at <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-integrity>.

Course GenAI Policy

Students can use generative AI tools to enhance their assignments, provided that they properly cite any AI-generated content and ensure it adheres to academic integrity standards. When using generative AI for the assignments, please include a brief explanation of how the tool was used and the contributions it made to your work.

Other Policies

Please be considerate in class. This means turning off your cell phones (and all other potentially noisy devices) or set it to “silent mode”, limiting conversation to a minimum, and, if necessary, entering/leaving the classroom as quietly as possible. Not doing so creates a negative externality

for your fellow students and will not be tolerated.

Course Schedule (tentative and subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic
1	February 3	Introduction & Causal Model
2	February 10	Income, Nutrition, and Health
3	February 24	Investment in Human Capital
4	March 3	Education Quality
5	March 10	Gender Inequality
6	March 17	Catchup/Review
7	March 24	Behavioral Economics
8	March 31	Firms and Productivity
9	April 14	Agriculture and Technology Adoption
10	April 21	Environment and Development
11	April 28	Catchup/Review
12	May 5	Research Proposal Presentation