UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Microeconomics of Development

2627-2-F5603M007-F5603M007-1

Learning objectives

Having successfully completed this module, students will be able to:

- Knowledge and understanding: understand key issues faced by developing countries and the main theoretical and empirical debates in the field of Development Economics.
- Applying knowledge and understanding: apply economic concepts, theories, and empirical evidence to analyze major development challenges, with particular attention to how experimental and quasi-experimental methods are used in Development Economics.
- Making judgements: formulate balanced and critical assessments of academic contributions in Development Economics, identifying their research questions, empirical strategies, findings, limitations, and implications for policy and future research.
- Communication skills: discuss academic papers in Development Economics clearly and confidently, using appropriate economic terminology and engaging constructively with different interpretations of the evidence.
- Learning skills: independently read and critically engage with academic articles in Development Economics, including both classic contributions and recent papers at the research frontier, and develop the skills needed to contribute to the field, including through the preparation of an optional research proposal.

Contents

This module will cover a range of topics in the field of Development Economics. The focus will be on the micro-level and the lectures will build around the evidence provided by some of the most recent studies in the field. The module will be structured in two main parts: methodology and topics.

Detailed program

The first part will focus on methodology. After a short introduction to the field, we will discuss the most common methodologies used in Development Economics. We will cover both experimental and quasi-experimental approaches. Although you are probably already familiar with many of these methodologies from statistics or econometric modules, we will focus here on how to concretely apply them within Development Economics.

In the second part we will then zoom into a set of topics of special relevance to low-income countries and we will see how the methodologies previously discussed can be applied to investigate these topics. We will discuss questions such as:

- What is the relationship between development and psychological wellbeing?
- How does poverty affect stress levels and cognitive functions?
- Do perceptions on returns to schooling affect actual educational investment decisions?
- Do school subsidies raise school enrollment?
- What are the historical origins of cross-cultural differences in beliefs and values regarding the role of women in society?
- Is it possible to modify social norm that constraint female labor force participation?
- Is there any link between climate change and violent conflicts across the globe?

- What is the impact of air pollution on child mortality?

Prerequisites

Good understanding of basic econometrics (master level) is required.

Teaching methods

Lectures, with a mix of "standard" lectures and more interactive tutorial-style lectures.

Assessment methods

Assessment is based on a 90-minute written exam, consisting of open-ended questions, and an optional research proposal to be developed throughout the module.

The written exam is divided into two main sections. The first section asks students to discuss the literature covered in class, with attention to the relevant research questions, empirical strategies, findings, and limitations. The second section requires students to apply the tools and concepts discussed during the module to a new empirical or policy context.

The optional research proposal is structured around three deadlines. In the first submission, students present their initial idea and research question, on which they will receive personalized feedback. The second submission consists of the final research proposal. Together with the written proposal, students will also submit a short 5-minute video presenting their project. The third deadline will be set approximately 10 days after the final submission. Each student will be assigned one video to review and will be asked to provide written critical feedback. Note that the peer review exercise will be assessed as part of the reviewing student’s work, but it will not affect the grade of the proposal being reviewed.

No midterm exams are scheduled. The final assessment and grade registration take place exclusively during the official examination sessions.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Corse materials include lecture notes and scientific papers.

Semester

Second semester

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | CLIMATE ACTION | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS