

Course Syllabus

Ec 1530

Health, Hunger and the Household in Developing Countries

Logistics

Professor: Andrew D. Foster (afoster@brown.edu (<mailto:afoster@brown.edu>))

Office Phone: 401 863 2537

203 Menco Hall (68 Waterman St)

Office hours: Wednesday 1-4 (scheduled) 4-5 (open).

Office hours appointment calendar: [Click here](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUIzSVR1bUVpNzktfGRIZmF1bHR8NjFjU0OWRkM2NhOGM1ZGY5ZTRjNGEwNWQ5NDMzN2E) [_](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUIzSVR1bUVpNzktfGRIZmF1bHR8NjFjU0OWRkM2NhOGM1ZGY5ZTRjNGEwNWQ5NDMzN2E)

Zoom room: [brown.zoom.us/my/afoster](https://brown.zoom.us/j/94676700259)

TA: Marcela Mello Silva

TA Email: marcela_mello_silva@brown.edu (mailto:marcela_mello_silva@brown.edu)

TA section: Thursday 12:00-13:00;

TA Office hours: Friday 9-10am and 12:00-1:00 pm

TA/OH: <https://brown.zoom.us/j/94676700259> [_](https://brown.zoom.us/j/94676700259)

Primary Meeting: M 3:00-5:30pm

Location: 102 Friedman Hall (if in person)

Class meeting zoom id: 934 9599 9665

Exam: Three-hour timed open-book exam during a 24 hour block of the exam period.

Overrides: Override or waiting list requests should be submitted through courses@brown (<mailto:courses@brown>).

COVID-19 Plans:

Class meetings will consist of a 2.5 hour per week seminar and a one hour per week TA section. My plan is that the seminar will be hybrid (in person and online) and primarily synchronous. The two TA sections are also likely to be hybrid. However, based on enrollment, epidemiological conditions, and student demand we may end up doing most or all classes as an online synchronous seminar. If we do move to in-person and the desired in-person enrollment exceeds 19 we will set up a rotation so that those wishing to be in-person would be on-line, say, one of three classes. We will do our best to ensure that on-line synchronous students are able to fully participate in any in-person sessions. In addition, all students are encouraged to use Piazza to raise and discuss issues at any time of the night and day. Contributions to Piazza will be part of the class participation grade.

Given the seminar nature of the class, it will function most effectively if most students are able to participate synchronously. As the seminar is only once a week perhaps it will not be too destructive of

sleep schedules even if one is 10-12 hours out of sync. All classes will be recorded for those who need to do all or parts of the course asynchronously. If there is demand, I will host a meeting with asynchronous students each week after they have had a chance to view the lecture so that they can ask questions and discuss what transpired. My proposed time is Wednesday 8-9AM, but this will be confirmed after the first class.

Following University guidelines the first three seminar classes at a minimum will be by Zoom. The TA sections will not meet for the first two weeks.

University required/recommended syllabus elements:

[Technological Support](http://afosterri.org/courses/technology.pdf) [↗](#) [_\(http://afosterri.org/courses/technology.pdf\)](http://afosterri.org/courses/technology.pdf)

[Recordings for Class Purposes Only](http://afosterri.org/courses/recording.pdf) [↗](#) [_\(http://afosterri.org/courses/recording.pdf\)](http://afosterri.org/courses/recording.pdf)

[Following COVID-19 Precautions in Class](http://afosterri.org/courses/hybrid.pdf) [↗](#) [_\(http://afosterri.org/courses/hybrid.pdf\)](http://afosterri.org/courses/hybrid.pdf)

[Course Expenses](http://afosterri.org/courses/books.pdf) [↗](#) [_\(http://afosterri.org/courses/books.pdf\)](http://afosterri.org/courses/books.pdf)

[Accessibility](http://afosterri.org/courses/ada.pdf) [↗](#) [_\(http://afosterri.org/courses/ada.pdf\)](http://afosterri.org/courses/ada.pdf)

Video Introduction

A video introduction to the course is [here](#). [↗](#)

[_https://brown.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=5ef700b3-7fe7-4a6f-9107-ac1e014bdb60\)](https://brown.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=5ef700b3-7fe7-4a6f-9107-ac1e014bdb60)

Summary

This course uses the tools of the empirical microeconomics to study the process of economic development from the perspective of the household in low-income settings. We emphasize in particular the extent to which economic models of individual and household decision making can be used to better understand relationships among health, nutrition, fertility, savings, schooling, labor productivity, wage determination, and gender-based inequality; the use of quantitative tools for the assessment of these economic models; and the potential for theoretically grounded empirical research to assist in the design of more effective interventions to improve the well-being of poor households in the developing world.

Goal

By the end of the course you should (1) have a better appreciation of the challenges and opportunities faced by poor households in low-income countries (2) be able to read and evaluate theoretical and empirical research on the microeconomics of economic development (3) gained practice in the application of skills learned in your intermediate economics courses to real-world problems.

Prerequisites:

Prerequisites: ([ECON 1110](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201110) [↗](#) [_\(https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201110\)](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201110) or [1130](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201130) [↗](#) [_\(https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201130\)](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201130)) and ([ECON 1620](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201620) [↗](#) [_\(https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201620\)](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=ECON%201620)), [APMA 1650](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=APMA%201650) [↗](#) [_\(https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=APMA%201650\)](https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=APMA%201650)), [1655](#) [↗](#)

(<https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=APMA%201655>), [CSCI 1450](#) ↗ (<https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=CSCI%201450>) or [0450](#) ↗ (<https://cab.brown.edu/search/?p=CSCI%200450>.)

Course evaluations:

Wondering if the course is for you? [Here are evaluations](#) ↓

(https://canvas.brown.edu/courses/1082379/files/62968222/download?download_frd=1) from 2018 and the [critical review](http://www.thecriticalreview.org/ECON/1530) ↗ (<http://www.thecriticalreview.org/ECON/1530>) from 2016.

Related courses:

Brown has number of courses related to economic development and you are encouraged to take more than one if you have an interest in this area. Economics concentrators sometimes take 1510 and then take one or more of the more specialized course, but you can take the specialized courses in any combination or sequence and are not required to take 1510.

Ec 0510 Development and International Economy -- general course for non-majors

Ec 1510 Economic Development -- general development course for majors 20-25% overlap.

Ec 1520 The Economic Analysis of Institutions -- specialized upper level course focused on land, labor and credit markets and the role of community institutions

EC 1530 Health, Hunger and the Household in Developing Countries -- specialized upper level course focused on health, education, and household behavior.

Ec 1355 Economics of the environment in developing countries -- specialized upper level courses focused on the environment

Ec 1560 Economic Growth -- specialized upper level course focused on macroeconomic analysis of the process of development

Course requirements:

We are using Canvas for this course. Students registered for the course should be able to access the full canvas site by logging in through canvas.brown.edu. Those not registered can access a limited version of the site through <https://canvas.brown.edu/courses/1082379>

Dates on the initial version of this syllabus should be taken as tentative. I may, in the course of the semester, update the timing or material listed. Any changes will generally be made at least two weeks in advance of the relevant dates. I will also announce any changes in class. You are responsible for keeping up with the requirements as listed on the active online version.

Paper and single chapter readings will general be available through Canvas and assignments should be submitted through Canvas unless indicated otherwise.

Readings: The primary focus of the course will be on reading and working through articles published or suitable for major economics journals. These, except for the chapters from Banerjee and Duflo, will be available on the class web page. If you are off campus you will need VPN to access some articles. You will be expected to read these articles and understand their basic approach and conclusions on your

own well enough to discuss them in class. You are not responsible for the technical details in these articles unless these details are highlighted in the lectures.

Class:

- Class attendance in-person, by zoom, or through recordings is critical.
- In each class, there will be a mix of lectures, student interaction, and discussion about particular papers. Students should come to class prepared to describe how empirical results in assigned readings illustrate the authors' main points as well as put the results in a broader context.
- Please have some paper and pen available (or a tablet and stylus) during class so you can do some simple derivations.
- I have added some videos to the modules. There is no need to view prior to class unless this is explicitly stated in the module, but you may find them to be useful references.
- I will be using Poll Everywhere during some classes to get feedback. You can interface with Poll Everywhere through the address <https://pollev.com/andrewfoster440> [↗] (<https://pollev.com/andrewfoster440>), by clicking on the link in the first module, or by downloading the Poll Everywhere App. I also may use TopHat for some presentations.
- Overall class participation and interaction through Piazza will constitute 20% of your grade.
- It is your responsibility to access and learn the materials covered in a week that you miss.
- Please keep your video on in zoom during class if this does not create bandwidth problems, as visual feedback is very helpful to me. All classes will be recorded for class purposes only.
- I suggest keeping your mute on most of the time in class, but feel free to turn it on to ask a question or make a point. Please feel to interrupt me verbally. You can use the chat but you (or the TA or other student) may need to let me know the comment is there.

Problem sets (3 over semester): Build on readings and lectures and test theoretical and empirical skills. You are welcome to work with others but should submit your own. Please combine code, text, photos (e.g., of any hand derivations) etc. as a single pdf document and submit online (or we may use Gradebook). Problem sets will count equally and will, in total, represent 20% of your grade. Note that you will need to work with Maple and Stata on these problem sets. You have several options to access them as stated below.

Online quizzes (almost every week): 2-3 short answer questions, usually T/F with explanation. Online quizzes will count equally and will, in total, represent 20% of your grade. You are welcome to upload your answers as images rather than typing them out; this may be especially useful for the more mathematical problems. They are due on the Friday after the class in which the relevant papers are discussed, but please attempt them and be ready to discuss during the class meeting. I also encourage you to discuss your answers with classmates.

Short paper (3): You are asked to write three 3-5 page papers on a current issue related to the material in the course. I will provide a list of questions from which you should select one and you should answer them using both papers on the syllabus and those from the literature. You can also pick your own topic if you clear it with me first. You may find it particularly useful to look at papers presented at recent

development conferences listed at neudc.org and ibread.org. Short papers will count equally and will, in total, represent 20% of your grade. We may have a writing fellow in which case deadlines may be updated so that you have an adequate chance to get feedback and revise.

Final: You will have a final during the exam period. It will count 20% of your grade. It will be online and synchronous and will be offered over a 24 hour period to accommodate students in different time zones. You will be able to access notes papers etc., but there will be significant time pressure so you would be well served to study as if you do not have access to this material. Contact by any means with other students from the class on matters related to the class during this 24 hour period will be considered a possible violation of the Brown Academic code.

Time: Anticipated time requirements for this course are as follows: Classes: 28 hours (12 @ 2.33 hours), Section: 8 hours (8 @ 1 hours), Papers: 15 (3 @ 5 hours) , Problem Sets: 15 hours (3 @ 5 hours), Readings: 96 (48 @ 2 hours), Online Responses: 24 (12 @ 2 hours), Final Exam: 14 (1 @ 16). Total: 200 hours.

Lates: I allow up to three late submissions total over the course of the semester without penalty. These credits may be used in any combination for papers, problem sets, or online responses and will be tracked automatically by Canvas. Due dates for late submissions are one week after the date listed on canvas. If there is a need for further accommodation on assignments please discuss with an Academic Dean.

Software:

Students need to have access to both Stata and Maple. You have a number of options. First, both applications are available for free through Brown's [remote apps server](#).

<https://ithelp.brown.edu/kb/articles/connect-to-brown-s-remoteapp-service-on-windows>. This should suffice if you are close to Providence and have a good internet connection. Second, Stata can be downloaded from the server but requires a keyed connection and thus reasonable internet. Third, both can be purchased either for the semester or as a permanent license. Stata information for six-month \$48 or a permanent \$225 license is [here](#) [_ \(https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/\)](https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/).

For Maple there is a [permanent license](#)

[_ \(https://www.maplesoft.com/products/maple/student/faqs.aspx\)](https://www.maplesoft.com/products/maple/student/faqs.aspx) for \$100 and I have arranged for a semester rental \$29 (email me for the license code).

Books:

Please purchase or otherwise have access to:

A. Banerjee and E. Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*, Perseus, 2011 Paperback: \$8.98

This book provides an excellent framework and background for the topics discussed in the course and cites many of the specific articles.

Some other useful books:

GS Becker *A Treatise on the Family*, Harvard, 1981, 1991

A classic book illustrating economic models of household behavior

WK Bryant and CD Zick, *The Economic Organization of the Household*, Cambridge 2006

An alternative book on household behavior that may be easier to follow

JF Ermisch *An Economic Analysis of the Family*, Princeton 2003

A third book that focuses particularly on demographic aspects of household behavior.

D Ray, *Development Economics*, Princeton, 1998

This text is used by other development courses in the Economics Department and provides a useful summary treatment of some topics in the course.

G. Koop *Analysis of Economic Data*, Wiley, 2005 Available online as

ebook: <http://library.brown.edu/find/Record/b4013935>

<http://library.brown.edu/find/Record/b4013935> Useful summary of statistics and regression.

JD Angrist and JS Pishke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*, Princeton 2008

A useful summary of practice of applied econometrics

Structure:

Details of course modules that include readings, notes, videos and online quizzes are at [Modules List](#)