Professor: Chiodi, Vera

Course title: Impact evaluation of public policies in international development [2019-2020]
Thursday, 2-4pm (Room TBC)  
Language of instruction: English
Semester: Fall Semester

Course description - Objective of the course:
This course introduces several topics of new development economics, an approach that is grounded on the growing global concern for issues such as poverty and inequality coupled with rigorous economic analysis. The “old” approach to development economics was based in industrial economics, public planning and economic thinking, among others. The “new” approach is equally concerned with issues such as the elimination of poverty, the determinants of poverty traps, the causes and consequences of population growth, the implications of wealth and income inequalities on a country's growth prospects and the role and evaluation of policies. The exposure to new theories of economic development will give the students the chance to use economic theory and economic tools in ways that promote the welfare of underprivileged people.

One of the primary challenges in international development is to determine the policies and interventions that are effective at improving the welfare of the world's poor. In recent years, rigorous impact evaluations are increasingly used to assess whether a development program, policy or intervention works, i.e. causes actual improvements in welfare outcomes.

This course will provide a detailed understanding of impact evaluations in practice. Many of the topics, such as measuring outcomes and dealing with threats to the validity of an evaluation, are relevant for all methodologies. Students will be provided with tools to determine the strength of current evaluations and critically raise interesting questions, both from a theoretical and practical view.

The course will present material through interactive lectures and case studies using examples from completed or ongoing field experiments.

Knowledge and understanding:
• Summarize the main issues facing developing countries.
• Demonstrate familiarity with and assess the use of economic tools and statistical analysis in analyzing the problems of developing countries.

Skills:
• Select and apply appropriate techniques to analyze problems based on scenarios from development economics.
• Analyze, evaluate and interpret various measures of economic inequality.
Course requirements (grading & assessment)
Grades will be calculated as follows:

- Class participation: 20%
- Exam: 40%
- Research project / Class presentation (provisional): 40%

Course workload
Students are expected to read the required readings before each class and to actively participate in class discussions.

Pedagogical format
The lectures are interactive. Theory and key concepts will be presented in lecture format.

Required readings
The following readings will be used throughout the course:

Lecture notes are also part of the required readings (slides and other material posted in Moodle).

COURSE OUTLINE (PROVISIONAL)

Session 1 & 2: Big topics of Development Economics
Presentation of the semester.

Required readings:
- Chapter 1 in: Gertler et al., *Impact evaluation in practice*.

Session 3 & 4: Development theories, poverty measurement. Why evaluate? What is impact evaluation?

Required readings:
- Chapter 1, 3 in: Gertler et al., *Impact evaluation in practice*.


Required readings:
- Chapter 5, 6 and 7 in: Gertler et al., *Impact evaluation in practice*.

Optional readings:
Session 6: Designing a randomized evaluation
Required readings:
Chapter 4 in: Gertler et al., Impact evaluation in practice.

Recommended readings:

Session 7: Externalities and Imperfect Compliance
Required readings: Chapters 8,9 in: Gertler et al., Impact evaluation in practice.

Optional readings:

Session 8: Attrition and Analysis / Outcomes, measurement and data collection
Required readings:
Chapters 12,13 in: Gertler et al., Impact evaluation in practice.

Optional readings:

Session 9: Planning sample size and data analysis
Required readings:
Chapters 11 in: Gertler et al., Impact evaluation in practice.


Assignment for this session (if applicable- idem): Problem set 3.

Session 10 & 11:
Oral presentations (possibly spread over the ten sessions)

Session 12: Final exam
Two (or one) hours exam.