

# Foundations of Economics for Sustainable Development

## Fall 2021

**Instructor:** Dr. Renata Serra  
**Office:** 421 Grinter Hall  
**Email:** [rserra@ufl.edu](mailto:rserra@ufl.edu)

**Office hours:** T 3-4 pm and F 1:30-2:30 pm  
**Sections:** AFS 6307 (170D) – INR 6708 (1111)  
**Times/location:** R P2-4, TUR 2328

### Course description and goals

This course is an introduction to the main topics and debates regarding sustainable economic development. In the spirit of the SDGs, which are global, we will start by reviewing how the key notions of wealth, poverty, inequality and resilience apply globally, in the North and the South. We will then delve into examining economic development challenges and policies more specifically for the so-called developing countries, especially in the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. The focus will move between the macro-level, where the units of analysis are whole countries and regions; and the micro-level, e.g. on behavior and choices at the individual or household level. Rather than on theories, the focus is on how concepts and models apply to practical contexts.

The course is organized around six thematic learning units. Each covers core topics and skills while allowing students to adapt the course material to their own interests. Targeted at MDP students, for whom it fulfills the core social science requirement, the course is open to interested Master and PhD students from other units on campus.

### Class format

The course consists of lectures, group discussions and hands-on activities and will use participatory and hands-on modalities to enhance student learning and contribution. Every effort will be made to foster a safe and collaborative learning environment. For these efforts to be successful, it is essential that each student takes responsibility for reading the materials according to the calendar, participating in all activities, and contributing eagerly and actively to both individual and collective learning and progress.

### Student learning outcomes

By the end of this course successful students will have gained:

1. Ability to apply relevant economic concepts to the analysis and understanding of key economics questions, including the determinants of income and wealth; the root of poverty and inequality; and discrimination due to gender, race, etc;
2. Knowledge of the different aspects of sustainability, including economic, environmental, social and institutional and how these relate to resilience;
3. Ability to use and interpret key economic development indicators, and a basic understanding of quantitative data analysis;
4. Familiarity with the context of economic policy-making, including political economy issues;
5. Ability to distinguish and analyze the complex factors affecting individual/household decision-making

## Reading

Two textbooks are required (we will refer to them by the title initials):

- **SED:** A Szirmai (2015) *Socio-Economic Development*, Cambridge University Press
- **PE:** A Banerjee and E Duflo, (2011) *Poor Economics*, Public Affairs, New York

All other required reading will be available on the course Canvas site.

## Grading and Assignments

The learning components and related assignments are briefly described below. Detailed instructions along with specific requirements and grading criteria will be provided on the Canvas course website. The cumulative number of points for this course is 1000.

- **Attendance and participation (100 points):** Class attendance is expected (unless you have an excusable reason as per UF Policies) and you should also actively participate in class discussions and activities. This portion of the grade reflects not just merely your virtual presence in class, but your meaningful and thoughtful commitment to learning the course material and contributing to peer learning.
- **Weekly Activities (150 points):** These will be weekly activities, such as discussion postings, quizzes, and debate moderations. The scope of these is to demonstrate your knowledge of the readings and hold you accountable to the weekly work. Each of them will be worth 25 points and I will grade and include the best 6 that you submit.
- **Unit-based assignments (each worth 125 points for a total of 750):** There will be one assignment at the end of each of the six learning units. Such assignments take various forms (short papers, data exercises, reflection pieces) and are meant to help you to gain practice in the analysis and application of the concepts studied.

The grading scale is as follows:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Tot %	94-100	90-93	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	<60

## CLASS TIME SCHEDULE

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this schedule during the semester. All communications and updates regarding the course will occur via the Canvas course site.

### Unit 1: Introduction to key concepts and application to the Global North and South

08/26: Income, Wealth and Health – How do we identify rich and poor countries? What are the main differences between the Global North and South? What is development economics?

09/02: Poverty and Inequality – How do people at the bottom fare – within the Global North and South? Why is inequality bad? How do inequality gaps look like along racial and gender lines? What is the contribution of Feminist Economics?

09/09: Resilience – What is resilience: at the level of individuals/households and at community/societal level? How do crises affect well-being? How have countries and families coped with the COVID-19 pandemics?

## **Unit 2: Economic Growth, Economic Development and De-Growth**

09/16: The experience of developing countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – What are the benefits of economic growth? What are the implications of structural change? Is industrialization essential for developing the economy? What is the role of policy?

09/23: Critiques to the economic growth model – what is a Green economy? What do proponents of De-growth say? What is the application in real contexts (Buen Vivir)?

## **Unit 3: Primary economic sectors: Agriculture and Livestock**

09/30: Agriculture/livestock – what is the role of agriculture/livestock for development and food security? Should people access food through own-production or through the market? What is the role of markets?

10/07: Enabling Policies for Agriculture/Livestock: What are the drivers of improved policy interventions for increasing farmers well-being and food security? What collection of interests and political economy conditions are more likely to lead to improved farmers? What is the role of farmer organizations and collective action?

## **Unit 4. Behavioral economics and applications**

10/14: Introduction to behavioral economics: What is limited rationality? How do people make choices? What is the role of social norms in decision-making? Application to one of the following: parent's fertility decisions; household education choices; Conditional Cash Transfers.

10/21: Application of behavioral economics to saving, credit and investment decisions: Why do poor people not save enough? Why don't credit and insurance institutions serve poor people? What are the constraints to optimal investment and successful entrepreneurship?

## **Unit 5. The micro-credit and feminist perspectives**

10/28: What is the micro-credit revolution? Why is micro-credit targeted to women and what are its limits? What is the evidence about its impact? What are the critiques?

11/04: Beyond micro-credit: Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Why do all major development agencies aim to enhance WEE? How do they measure it? What is the evidence on impact of interventions?

*11/11: Veteran's Day Holiday NO CLASS*

## **Unit 6. Foreign aid and investment**

11/18: The international economic order and the development architecture (The World Bank, IMF and the UN agencies). Does foreign aid contribute to economic development? What are the perspectives from aid critics and grass-root organizations in aid receiving countries?

*11/25: Thanksgiving Holiday NO CLASS*

12/02: What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)? What are the positive and negative effects of FDI on recipient countries? Who benefits and who loses? What are the impacts?

## University Policies and Resources

Grading in this class is consistent with UF policies available. These can be found [here](#). Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams and assignments follow University policies, which can be found by clicking [here](#). More details for this course can be found on the Canvas course site.

The official source of rules and regulations for UF students is the Undergraduate Catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/>) or Graduate Catalog (<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/>). The Student Handbook can be found at: <https://dso.ufl.edu/resources/student-handbook/>. Please familiarize with **Student Responsibilities**, including academic honesty and student conduct code at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/>.

In particular, note that UF students are bound by **The Honor Pledge**, which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

E-learning Supported Policies can be found at: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/supported-services/>.

### Disability Resource Center

Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) helps to provide an accessible environment for all by providing support services and facilitating accommodations, which can vary from course to course. Once registered with DRC, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### Campus Helping Resources – Health and Wellness

*U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

*Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

*Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

*University Police Department:* [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

*UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

## **Campus Helping Resources – Academic**

*E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

*Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

*Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

*Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

*Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.](#)

## **Other Campus Resources for Students**

Dean of Students Office (<https://dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261) provides a variety of services to students and families, including Field and Fork (UF's food pantry; [https://dso.ufl.edu/areas\\_services/hitchcock-field-fork-pantry/](https://dso.ufl.edu/areas_services/hitchcock-field-fork-pantry/)) and New Student and Family Programs ([https://dso.ufl.edu/areas\\_services/new-student-family-programs/](https://dso.ufl.edu/areas_services/new-student-family-programs/)).

Multicultural and Diversity Affairs (<https://multicultural.ufl.edu/>; 352-294-7850) celebrates and empowers diverse communities and advocates for an inclusive campus.

## **Statement Regarding Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available from this website (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at the public results website (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>).

## **In-class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is

considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.