Economics 4770 – Policy Analysis in International Development

CLASS DETAILS:
   Times: Monday and Wednesday: 3.40–5.45 PM
   Room: Pigott 201
   Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1.30–2.30 PM, or by appointment
   Syllabus updated: April 1, 2019

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Despite substantial efforts and money dedicated to development and development aid since World War II, it is only within the last decade that there has been a strong focus on evaluating individual programs and their effectiveness in a systematic fashion. The aim of this course is to introduce you to impact evaluation and its practice in a development setting. We will cover both theoretical and practical aspects of program evaluation and the associated econometric tools and their pros and cons. There will be a heavy emphasis on using real-world data sets to illustrate the different methods and we will use a statistical software package, R, to analyze data.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: To pass this course you must be able to do the following:

1. Explain the different possible approaches used for program evaluation and their pros and cons.

2. Choose the most appropriate approach for a given evaluation question.

3. Do applied statistical analysis using the tools covered on actual datasets.

4. Correctly interpret results of your analysis.

TEXTBOOK: The text is "Handbook on Impact Evaluation: Quantitative Methods and Practices," Shahidur R. Khandker, Gayatri B. Koolwal, and Hussain A. Samad (2010). The book is available in PDF for free at openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2693, but if you prefer an actual book you should be able to get it for a little over $30 from Amazon or other places. In addition we will be reading selected articles that use each method. Those will be available online as we move through the quarter.

STATISTICAL SOFTWARE: We will use a statistical software package called "R" for the course. R runs on Windows, Mac, and Linux and is free. You can find it at www.r-project.org Since R is not very helpful, we will use an IDE (integrated development environment) called RStudio, which you can find at www.rstudio.com. RStudio is also free.

You should download both programs to your personal computer. All the problem sets except for the first, which is done entirely online, uses R/RStudio. If you do not have your own computer both programs are available on the virtual desktop at the computer labs.

GRADING: Course grades will be assigned at the end of the quarter based on your performance in class using the following percentages:

- 80% Problem sets (drop lowest)
- 20% Group case study

The grade schedule is:

A range: 90-100% of total points — Superior performance
B range: 80-89% of total points — Good performance

C range: 70-79% of total points — Adequate performance

D range: 60-69% of total points — Poor performance

F range: less than 59% of total points — Failing

CLASS STRUCTURE: The classes will consist of a mixture of lectures on the theory behind the different methods, discussion of papers employing those methods, and hands-on implementation using R. You are expected to have read the material covered before class. The tentative course schedule with topics and readings from the book is below.

PROBLEM SETS: There will be one problem set per methods plus an initial problem set on R to familiarize your with the program. You will be given the data and directions on the analyses to perform. Your job will be to do the required analyses in R and write up the results in a short report.

GROUP CASE STUDY: The case study is your opportunity to use the methods covered to address real-world problems. You will be divided into groups of 3 and work under my guidance to identify a question and the associated data. A good approach is to do replication of a published study that you find of interest. The case study will be graded on the quality of the technical analysis and interpretation of results as well as the quality of writing and presentation. Deadline for the case study is Friday of the exam week.

FINAL: There is no standard final for the class. Instead we will use the last class day and the final exam time slot for presentations of the group projects

CONTACT INFORMATION:
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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TUTORIAL: www.seattleu.edu/academicintegrity/

ACADEMIC POLICIES ON THE REGISTRAR WEBSITE Be sure that you understand the following university academic policies, posted on the Registrar's website:

- Academic integrity policy
- Academic grading grievance policy

www.seattleu.edu/registrar/academics/performance/

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an "invisible disability" such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff located in Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: The use of laptops, netbooks, tablets, etc, in class to take class-notes, view slides or work on class projects is allowed. You need to ask permission to use laptops, netbooks, tablets, cellphones, etc, in class for any non-class related activity (including instant messaging, web-browsing, looking at cat videos, etc.).

EMAIL: Email is a blessing and a curse. It is an efficient means for requesting a meeting, but it can tempt you to avoid taking responsibility for ordinary course management. I will reply to emails that request a meeting, or a simple clarification of a course topic, but a detailed explanations of course material are best reserved for a face-to-face conversation. If you email me before noon I will do my best to respond the same day, otherwise you will receive a response the next business day. Do not expect a response over the weekends or over holidays. Finally, do not use Canvas to contact me.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES: I strive to create a learning environment in which you can be incredibly successful. My goal is to create and improve the learning environment throughout the quarter based on my own observations of the course and your feedback on what would help you learn more. In return, I ask and encourage you to make the most of this learning opportunity. Also, please take advantage of the academic support services available to you at the university. Even if you have had excellent study skills in the past, it is very easy to slip into suboptimal habits and these services can help you excel in your studies.

- LIBRARY AND LEARNING COMMONS www.seattleu.edu/learningcommons/
- WRITING CENTER: The Writing Center employs undergraduate writing consultants who assist students at all stages of the writing process. Consultants will help students begin writing tasks, organize and develop first drafts, and revise and edit later drafts.
- LEARNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: Learning Assistance Programs provide peer tutoring, facilitated study groups, and learning strategy development through scheduled workshops and individual meetings with a learning specialist.

Economics 4770 – Schedule

Date	Read book chapters(s) before class	Topic
04-01		Introduction and overview of class
04-03	1 and 2	Counter-factuals and causal inference - R introduction
04-08		Regression analysis review and R practice
04-10		Regression analysis review and R practice (online)
04-15	3 and 12	Randomization
04-17		Randomization
04-22		No class - Easter
04-24		No class
04-29	4 and 13	Propensity score matching
05-01		Propensity score matching
05-06	5 and 14	Difference-in-difference
05-08		Difference-in-difference
05-13	6 and 15	Instrumental variables
05-15		Instrumental variables
05-20		Instrumental variables
05-22	7 and 16	Regression discontinuity
05-27		No class - Memorial Day
05-29		Regression discontinuity
06-03		Regression discontinuity
06-05	8 and 9	Distributional effects and economic models
06-10		Outside presenter(s) – TBC
06-13		4:00-5:50 PM – Group case study presentations