In this seminar, we will examine the application of economic theory to economic conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. Emphasis will be placed on analyzing current economic issues and policies in their historical context. The course is organized around a series of broad questions which will be explored with reference to particular societies. We will examine the historical roots of the current structure of African economies, the economic reform process (with particular attention to Ghana), agricultural and industrial development, patterns of poverty and income distribution, health and education and international economic relations. Each student will write a term paper describing and assessing an aspect of one country’s national development strategy.

Prerequisites: Economics 150, or the permission of the instructor.

Course Requirements:

Each student will be expected to be prepared to discuss the required readings assigned each week, and to write a pair of short seminar papers which will serve as the basis for discussion. These are not research papers; they should synthesize and critically evaluate the assigned readings. The discussion papers will be assigned the first week of the seminar. The discussion papers must be posted on the class web site by 5:00 PM on the Saturday preceding the class at which it will be discussed. All students must read the discussion papers before class.

In addition, each student will write a research paper on one aspect of a single country’s development policy. The paper should describe the purpose and historical origin of the policy, and assess its impact both in terms of its purported goal and more generally. The research paper is due on the final day of the reading period.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the seminar papers (1/3), class participation (1/3) and research paper (1/3).

Books:


Weekly Schedule:

1/13: **Introduction to African Economies.**  
Overview of course and of African economies

Discussion: why do you think Africans have low incomes?

1/27: **Historical Patterns of Growth in Africa**

*Readings:*


*Discussion papers:*

Characterize the most important features of post-independence economic performance in Africa.

How has Africa’s historical role in the global economy influenced the structures of its domestic economies?

2/3: **Theories of Social Organization**

*Readings:*


*Discussion papers:*

Choose an economic institution in rural Africa and provide an interpretation of its role as a mechanism for dealing with the consequences of risk. Evaluate the importance and relevance of this interpretation.

How important is the concept of the ‘moral economy’ for understanding rural social organization in Africa?
2/10: States, Markets and Economic Reform

Readings:


Discussion Papers:

How did state interventions in agricultural markets discourage agricultural growth?

Describe and assess the economic rationale for structural adjustment reforms.

2/17: Ghana’s Reform Process

Readings


Describe the key elements of structural adjustment in Ghana. Assess their effectiveness in addressing the problems they were designed to resolve.

What are the present challenges facing economic reform in Ghana after twenty years of structural adjustment?

2/24: Income Distribution and Poverty

Readings


Discussion Papers:

What policies should African governments follow to alleviate poverty?

Compare and contrast household surveys and participatory poverty assessments. What do they tell us about poverty in Africa?

3/3: Agriculture and Development

Readings

*Collier - Gunning, section 3.1


Eicher and Baker, pp. 113-163.


Discussion Papers

What are the most important barriers to improving rural incomes in Africa?

What is the appropriate role for governments (more generally, "outsiders") in the promotion of technical change in African agriculture?

3/24: Industrial Growth

Readings

*Collier-Gunning, section 3.2

*Bigsten et al.


Discussion Papers:

Why has there been such slow growth of the manufacturing sector in Africa?

The Washington Consensus suggests a minimalist role for the State. How appropriate is this for the development of the industrial sector in Africa?

3/31: Education and Human Capital

Readings


*Easterly, William (2001), The Elusive Quest for Growth, Chapter 4


Discussion Papers:

As part of the economic reforms many African countries in the 1980s and 1990s implemented education sector reforms. Assess the impact of these reforms on achieving the objective of universal primary education. (The UNESCO web-site is a useful source for statistics on school enrollments).

Discuss the relationships between education and economic growth. How important is increasing schooling attainment for growth, and how does income growth affect schooling attainment?

4/7: Health


Discussion Papers:

Assess the standard epidemiological models of HIV infection. Is it useful or misleading to incorporate rational choice into such models?

What are your suggestions for a global framework for developing new technologies to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa? What elements of patent policy, prizes, pre-commitment, and public research are likely to be most useful?

4/14: Trade Patterns and Liberalization

Readings


Discussion Papers:

Why has Africa’s share of world trade declined?

Is trade liberalization necessary and sufficient for successful export diversification in Africa?

4/21: AID, Debt and Development

Readings


Discussion Papers:

Discuss the evolution of the HIPC Initiative. What are the implications for relations between Africa and its development partners?

Conditionality and Selectivity. What should be the criteria for development assistance to Africa?

4/28: Why has Africa Grown Slowly?

Readings


Discussion Papers

Why has African grown slowly? What are the implications of your view for appropriate development policy in Africa?