

Course information 2026-27

DV2192 Poverty and Development

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 5

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

MODE: Locally Taught and Independent Learner Route Only (not available for Online Taught students)

Summary

This course focusses on explaining the nature of economic and human development in the developing world, and why some countries and regions have become developed while others have not.

Conditions

Please refer to the relevant programme structure in the EMFSS Programme Regulations to check:

- where this course can be placed on your degree structure; and
- details of prerequisites and corequisites for this course.

You should also refer to the Exclusions list in the EMFSS Programme Regulations to check if any exclusions apply for this course.

Aims and objectives

The course aims to:

- Provide students with a greater understanding of the forces which have shaped development both historically and in the contemporary world.
- Develop a good understanding of regional differences in development and their origins across the world and within countries.
- Critically explore questions of causality as regards the origins and effects of development around the world.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, and having completed the Essential Reading and activities, students should be able to:

- Summarise and explain the various meanings of development and poverty.
- Demonstrate a good understanding of the diversity of development experiences across various parts of the developing world (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) as well as within each region.
- Explain the history of development and poverty reduction, both as regards the development experiences of now-developed countries as well as the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial histories of the developing world.
- Discuss the various proposed causes and effects of development and their causal relationships with development, including health, inequality, conflict, and demographic change.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the politics of development, both as how development can affect democratisation and how democratisation can affect development and poverty reduction.

Employability skills

Below are the three most relevant employability skills that students acquire by undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

1. Decision Making
2. Creativity and Innovation
3. Complex Problem Solving

Essential reading

For full details, please refer to the reading list.

Acemoglu, D. & J. A. Robinson. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (Profile Books, 2013) [ISBN 9781846684302]

Deaton, A. *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth and the Origins of Inequality* (Princeton University Press, 2013) [ISBN 9780691165622].

Sen, A. *Development as freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) first edition [ISBN 9780192893307].

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour and fifteen-minute closed-book written examination.

Syllabus

Poverty and Development

- **Theories of poverty and development:** An introduction to theories of poverty and well-being. Sen's theory of capabilities and its influence on the concept of human development.
- **Poverty and the economic lives of the poor:** How poverty can be defined and measured in the developing world; the reality of the day-to-day lives of the poor. Variation in the conceptualisation and measurement of poverty across contexts, consequences of these variations for development policy.

A history of poverty, development, and inequality

- **Colonialism and development:** The relationship between colonialism and development: impact of various factors on development and poverty reduction in the post-colonial world.
- **Economic growth, inequality, and development:** The relationship between economic growth, inequality, and development. How and why economic growth can reduce or raise inequality; political, economic, and social causes and consequences of high levels of inequality.

Demographic change, poverty, and development

- **Demography and development:** The relationship between development and major demographic phenomena, specifically fertility decline, mortality decline, population growth and population ageing.
- **Urbanisation, slums, and urban bias:** The relationship between urbanisation and development in a broad sense. Origins of modern urbanisation and slums, and consequences of the urban transition for economic, social, and political development.
- **Health and poverty:** This chapter provides an overview of the relationship between health and development. It focuses both on how and when better health leads to higher levels of development, as well as on when and why development leads to better health.

The politics of poverty and development

- **Democracy and development I:** From development to democracy: How and why development leads to democracy. Ways in which poverty can hinder democratisation and its effect on the rate of democratisation in the developing world.
- **Democracy and development II:** From democracy to poverty reduction: The effect of democracy on poverty reduction and development. Ways in which democratisation should lead to poverty alleviation but often does not, and why poverty reduction can be so difficult in democratic contexts.
- **Poverty and famines:** Overview of the causes of famine, examining major theories of Malthus and Sen on the relationship between food availability, access to food and democracy.
- **Conflict and development:** The relationship between conflict and development; how and why poverty can lead to violence and war, and how conflict and the threat of conflict can spur development in certain contexts.