

Econ 694/AEM 694/NS 699: Poverty and Well-Being in Africa

Professors Chris Barrett, Ravi Kanbur, David Sahn and Stephen Younger

Time: Wednesday: 12:20-2:15, every other week for Fall 06 and Spring 07. Participation is required for both semesters. The initial meeting will be August 30.

Location: Rm. 155 Martha van Rensselaer Hall

Course description: The course will explore the economic and social factors that have impeded growth and poverty reduction in Africa. We will take a "bottom-up" perspective, which starts from the capabilities of individuals, households, and communities — their productivities, their vulnerabilities, their institutions, and their environment — and consider in detail how economic and social development can and do play out at the ground level. Our aim is to understand further the economic, social, institutional, and natural constraints that keep Africa's poor from prospering in the context of growth-oriented reforms. While there are many structural constraints that hold the poor back, we will focus on four: education; health and nutrition; risk, vulnerability and poverty dynamics; and empowerment and institutions.

Course requirements: Students will be expected to prepare two term papers (one each semester), including a comprehensive literature review related to a subject jointly selected with the instructors, as well as lead class sessions based on this research. Active participation in all the class meetings is expected, which will require a substantial amount of reading.

Credit hours: 2 credits/semester

Grading: S/U or letter grade, at students' discretion.

Pre-requisites: The course will be designed for PhD students from the social sciences in their second through fourth years of study, and will involve highly technical economic analysis. Advanced knowledge of statistics and/or econometrics will be required, as well as a graduate level proficiency in microeconomics (normally associated with having passed the qualifying exam). Enrollment will be limited to 10 to 12 students, by permission of the instructors. Students interested in taking the course should submit a one to two page description of their research interests. This can be quite general, and need only define the issues and themes that the student envisages being the focus of their research. Please submit your request to take to course to:
david.sahn@cornell.edu