

Global Studies 298 Benin Study Abroad: Economic Development in Africa

Professor: Richard Akresh

On-campus classes meet Tuesday 7-10pm:

October 22, November 5, November 19, and December 3 (classes are mandatory)

Benin Travel Dates: January 4-18, 2020

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Course Overview:

Paul Collier, whose book *The Bottom Billion* (2007) conveys what has become typical of the image of poor countries: “The countries at the bottom coexist with the twenty-first century, but their reality is the fourteenth century: civil war, plague, ignorance.”

However, a recent McKinsey Global Institute report, “Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies”, seems to indicate the reality might be different:

“If recent trends continue, Africa will play an increasingly important role in the global economy. By 2040, Africa will be home to one in five of the planet’s young people and will have the world’s largest working-age population. Global executives and investors cannot afford to ignore the continent’s immense potential. A strategy for Africa must be part of their long-term planning. Today the rate of return on foreign investment in Africa is higher than in any other developing region. Early entry into African economies provides opportunities to create markets, establish brands, shape industry structure, influence customer preferences, and establish long-term relationships. Business can help build the Africa of the future.”

Using these contrasting images as its basis, this course will focus on examining development issues and studying how individuals experience economic development in Africa. The main theme of the course will be how individuals respond to incentives. We will study policies that have succeeded, or failed, to offer the right incentives to individuals (whether in a household, a firm, a village, or a country) and examine the impact of these policy decisions.

Join me for an amazing experience studying international development in **Benin, West Africa**. The course includes visits with different governmental, non-governmental, and private business organizations to examine the complexity of economic development issues in Africa. Students will meet with the U.S. Ambassador, visit Peace Corps volunteer projects in action, conduct field research, visit the African School of Economics, and meet with local university students. This program will challenge preconceived notions about the meaning of globalization and development—specifically as it relates to and impacts Beninese individuals. A 3-day, 2-night home-stay in a rural village is included.

Course Goals:

1. Investigate the complexity of Africa's development problems and examine the role of incentives in solving them.
2. Explore the variety of individual experiences in coping with globalization.
3. Challenge preconceived notions about the meaning of globalization and development and in particular, how it affects Beninese individuals.

These goals will be met by a combination of pre-trip lectures, readings (assembled in a course packet), and site visits in Benin.

Course Requirements:

1. Attend all lectures and site visits, participate fully in class discussions, and have completed all the required readings.
2. Prepare a presentation on-campus on one of the assigned topics relating to Benin.
3. Keep a daily field journal in Benin in which you will record what you observe in relation to the course themes and the readings.
4. Answer 3 essay questions that will be distributed and collected during our time abroad.

Course Evaluation:

Grades will be based on attendance and participation (40%), daily journal and essay questions (35%), and student presentation (25%).

Readings:

I will link the required readings for the course on the course website, and they will provide a background on economic development issues in Africa.

Recommended Travel Guide:

Benin: The Bradt Travel Guide (2nd edition) is one of the only English-language travel guide exclusively about Benin and it's fantastic. Here is a quote from it:

“Bradt's Benin also includes a field guide to gods, ghosts and dead people: after all, it's easy here to arrange to have a cup of tea with a wizard and buy spells to make someone love you. And what makes Benin so special from a visitor's perspective is that such characters are a visible part of day-to-day life and encounters with them may well form the backbone of a Benin adventure.”

On-campus meetings:

Meeting #1, Tuesday, October 22, 2019, 7:00-10:00pm, (room TBD): Introduction, Logistics, and Course Overview

Meeting #2, Tuesday, November 5, 2019, 7:00-10:00pm: Economic Development in Africa and Discussion of Development Program Evaluation

Required Readings:

William Easterly. 2014. "[Celebrity Musicians Can't Feed the World](#)" Slate. April 29, 2014.

Birrell, Iam. 2012. "Our Image of Africa is Hopelessly Obsolete." The Guardian. August 26, 2012.

Pomeranz, Dina. 2017. "Impact Evaluation Methods in Public Economics: A Brief Introduction to Randomized Evaluations and Comparison with Other Methods." *Public Finance Review*, 45(1): 10-43.

McKinsey Global Institute Report. 2010. "Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies"

Miguel, Edward. 2008. "[Is It Africa's Turn?](#)" *Boston Review*, May 1, 2008.

Meeting #3, Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 7:00-10:00pm: Student Presentations

Meeting #4, Tuesday, December 3, 2019, 7:00-9:00pm: Group dinner

News:

BBC Africa: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm>

All Africa: <http://allafrica.com>

Africa Confidential: <http://www.africa-confidential.com/news>

Blogs:

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/>

<https://www.cgdev.org/section/opinions/blogs>

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/>

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/psd/>

<http://chrisblattman.com/>

<http://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/>

<http://www.poverty-action.org/blog>

Twitter:

https://twitter.com/seema_econ (Seema Jayachandran)

<https://twitter.com/pjakiela> (Pamela Jakiela)

<https://twitter.com/DinaPomeranz> (Dina Pomeranz)

<https://twitter.com/cblattts> (Chris Blattman)

<https://twitter.com/DaveEvansPhD> (David Evans)

<https://twitter.com/dmckenzie001> (David McKenzie)

Additional Recommended Readings**Economic Development**

Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo. 2011. *Poor Economics*. Public Affairs Publishing.

Easterly, William. 2002. *The Elusive Quest for Growth*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Economic Development in Africa

Easterly, William. 2009. "[Can the West Save Africa?](#)" *Journal of Economic Literature*, 47(2): 373-444.

Aker, Jenny and Isaac Mbiti. 2010. "Mobile Phones and Economic Development in Africa." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 24(3): 207-232.

Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo. 2007. "[The Economic Lives of the Poor](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(1): 141-167.

Development Program Evaluation

Duflo, Esther, Rachel Glennerster, and Michael Kremer. 2007. "[Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit](#)" *Handbook of Development Economics*, volume 4.

Education and Human Capital

Bold, Tessa, Deon Filmer, Gayle Martin, Ezequiel Molina, Brian Stacy, Christophe Rockmore, Jakob Svensson, and Waly Wane. 2017. "[Enrollment without Learning: Teacher Effort, Knowledge, and Skill in Primary Schools in Africa.](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31 (4): 185–204.

Mbiti, Isaac. 2016. "[The Need for Accountability in Education in Developing Countries.](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30 (3): 109–32.

Akresh, Richard, Damien de Walque, and Harounan Kazianga. 2013. "[Cash Transfers and Child Schooling: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation of the Role of Conditionality.](#)" *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6340*.

Akresh, Richard, Damien de Walque, and Harounan Kazianga. 2019. "Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation of the Household Welfare Impacts of Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers Given to Mothers or Fathers."

Trade Liberalization and Macro Development Policies

McMillan, Margaret, Dani Rodrik, and Karen Horn Welch. 2002. "When Economic Reform Goes Wrong: Cashews in Mozambique." *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper*, 9117.

Goodnow, Cecelia. 2006. "Olympia Couple Uses their Shea-Butter Business to Build a Brighter Future for Togo." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 7, 2006.

Agriculture and Development

Binswanger, Hans, John McIntire, and Christopher Udry. 1989. "Production Relations in Semi-Arid African Agriculture." Editor Pranab Bardhan, [The Economic Theory of Agrarian Institutions](#), Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 122-144.

Health: Malaria

Cohen, Jessica and Pascaline Dupas. 2010. "[Free Distribution or Cost-Sharing? Evidence from a Randomized Malaria Prevention Experiment](#)" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 125(1): 1-45.

Early Childhood Development

Almond, Douglas and Janet Currie. 2011. "[Killing Me Softly: The Fetal Origins Hypothesis](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25(3): 153-172.

Almond, Douglas and Bhashkar Mazumder. 2011. "[Health Capital and the Prenatal Environment: The Effect of Ramadan Observance during Pregnancy](#)." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 3(4): 56-85.

Atanasio, Orazio, Camila Fernandez, Emla Fitzsimons, Sally Grantham-McGregor, Costas Meghir, Marta Rubio-Codina. 2014. "[Using the Infrastructure of a Conditional Cash Transfer Program to Deliver a Scalable Integrated Early Child Development Program in Colombia: Cluster Randomized Control Trial](#)." *British Medical Journal*, 349(g5785).

Gertler, Paul, James Heckman, Rodrigo Pinto, Arianna Zanolini, Christel Vermeerch, Susan Walker, Susan Chang, and Sally Grantham-McGregor. 2014. "[Labor Market Returns to an Early Childhood Stimulation Intervention in Jamaica](#)"

HIV/AIDS

Canning, David. 2006. "[The Economics of HIV/AIDS in Low-Income Countries: The Case for Prevention](#)." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(3), 121-142.

Thirumurthy, Harsha, Joshua Graff Zivin, and Markus Goldstein. 2008. "[The Economic Impact of AIDS Treatment](#)." *Journal of Human Resources*, 43(3): 511-552.

de Walque, Damien, William Dow, and Rose Nathan. 2014. "[Rewarding Safer Sex: Conditional Cash Transfers for HIV/STI Prevention](#)." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7099. [Research summary]

Civil Wars and Conflict

Akresh, Richard. 2016. "[Climate Change, Conflict, and Children](#)" *Future of Children*, 26(1): 51-71.

Akresh, Richard, Sonia Bhalotra, Marinella Leone, and Una Osili. 2018. "First and Second Generation Impacts of the Biafran War"

Akresh, Richard, German Caruso, Harsha Thirumurthy. 2019. "Detailed Geographic Information, Conflict Exposure, and Health Impacts."

Tentative Schedule in Benin (meetings/excursions subject to change):

Saturday January 4, 2020-Saturday, January 18, 2020 (exact dates not yet finalized)

Saturday, January 4, 2020

2:10pm Arrive at O'hare

5:10pm Depart Chicago (Air France: ORD-PAR-COO)

Sunday, January 5, 2020

Hotel: Cotonou

9:35pm Arrive in Cotonou, Benin

Bus transfer from airport to hotel in Cotonou

Monday, January 6, 2020

Meals: All meals (Cotonou)

Hotel: Cotonou

8:00-10:00 Free time for students (buy cell phone SIM card, get cash from ATM, buy mosquito nets, email home)

10:30-12:30 Meeting with University of Abomey-Calavi faculty in Agronomy/Resource Conservation, tour agricultural research lab on campus

12:30-14:30 Lunch on University campus

15:00-18:00 Meeting with University of Abomey-Calavi English Club ("Titi Gueti English Club")

19:30 Dinner with English Club Board of Directors

Tuesday, January 7, 2020

Meals: All meals (Cotonou)

Hotel: Cotonou

8:00-10:00: Meeting with faculty/students of African School of Economics (ASE)

10:00-16:00 Travel to field site with ASE students and observe and help conduct household surveys/program evaluation

19:30 Dinner with ASE students

Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Meals: Breakfast, lunch (Cotonou); Dinner (Porto Novo)

Hotel: Centre Songhai, Porto Novo

9:00-11:00 Meeting with US Ambassador to Benin

11:00-13:00 Visit to Dantokpa market--largest open air-market in West Africa

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:30-18:00 Visit to Peace Corps volunteer field site

18:00-19:00 Drive to Porto Novo

Thursday, January 9, 2020

Meals: Breakfast/lunch (Porto Novo); Dinner (Ouidah)

Hotel: Ouidah

9:00-12:00 Meeting with Benin National Assembly legislators and Association of Journalists

12:00-13:30 Lunch

14:00-17:00 Tour of Centre Songhai (organic, biological fully integrated farm)

17:00-19:00 Drive to Ouidah

20:00 Dinner

Friday, January 10, 2020

Meals: All meals (Ouidah)

Hotels: Ouidah

Fete de Vodoun (Vodoun Festival): public holiday in Benin celebrating the Vodoo religion

Saturday, January 11, 2020

Hotels: Homestay in Lokossa

9:00-11:00 Meeting with USAID-Benin Community Health center program

11:30-13:00 Lunch

13:00-14:00 Drive to Lokossa

15:00 Installation with host families. Will have 2 Illinois students with each host family. I will also be staying in the village.

19:30 Dinner with host family

Sunday, January 12, 2020

Hotels: Homestay in Lokossa

9:00-12:00 Tour of village: Meet with village chief. Visit village market, school/health clinic

12:00 Lunch with host family

16:00-18:00 Traditional Dancing/drumming

19:00 Group dinner with all host families

Monday, January 13, 2020

Hotel: Grand Popo

8:00 Depart Lokossa

9:00-11:00 Visit Mangrove restoration NGO

11:30-12:30 Drive to Grand Popo

Free afternoon in Grand Popo on the beach

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

Meals: Breakfast (Grand Popo), Lunch/Dinner (Bohicon)

Hotel: Bohicon

8:00 Drive to Foret de Lama

10:00-12:00 Site visit with government-community forestry revitalization project

12:00-13:00 Drive to Bohicon

13:00-14:30 Lunch

15:00-17:00 Tour of SHB Cotton Oil Processing Factory

19:00 Dinner

Wednesday, January 15, 2020

Meals: all meals (Bohicon)

Hotel: Bohicon

9:00-12:00 Site visit with Catholic Relief Services (education sector)

15:00-18:00 Site visit with World Bank (youth unemployment training program)

19:30 Dinner

Thursday, January 16, 2020

Meals: Breakfast (Bohicon) Dinner (Cotonou)

Hotel: Cotonou

9:00-12:00 Site visit with Technoserve (small business development organization)

14:00-17:00 Site visit with UNICEF (and meeting with children they are working with)

17:00 Return to Cotonou

20:00 Dinner

Friday, January 17, 2020

Free day in Cotonou

Visit to Artisanal Center to buy souvenirs

6:30pm Departure reception/farewell dinner

9:30pm Transport to airport

11:55pm Depart Cotonou (COO-PAR-ORD)

Saturday, January 18, 2020

3:25pm Arrive in Chicago