Reading List

Course Organization

The class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. in AAH 3245. The course grade will be based on three components: three problem sets, an in-class presentation of a paper from the current literature, and a final exam.

The main focus of the course is what may be termed the “transition perspective” on economic development. This term summarizes an approach to economic development that recognizes that the steady economic growth experienced by modern industrial economies is a historically recent phenomenon. Until about 200 years ago, living standards were essentially stagnant in every country in the world. The transition to modern economic growth started with the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. Since that period, a number of countries have followed the British example, and underwent a transformation from a pre-industrial, stagnant, mostly agricultural society to a modern economy were steady economic growth is the norm. This transformation is not simply a matter of growth rates, but is accompanied by other sweeping changes areas such as demographics, politics, and the structural composition of output. A key goal of development economics is to understand why not all countries are developed, i.e., the question why there are large and persistent income differences across countries, even though technological knowledge should, in principle, be mobile across countries. In this course, we will explore whether we can make progress on answering this question by taking explicit account of the various aspects the transition from stagnation to growth.

General Background Reading on Growth Theory

Acemoglu, Daron. *Introduction to Modern Economic Growth*. Unpublished Manuscript, MIT.
Introduction to the Transition from Stagnation to Growth


The Economic Takeoff and the Demographic Transition


Political Reform


**Colonial Origins and Property Rights**


**Income Distribution**


The Changing Composition of Output


More on Demographics, Household Economics, and the Economics of the Family


Endogenous Preferences


Endogenous Technology


Dynamic Political Economy


Social Capital


