

Syllabus

Course

African Development

Summer Term 2026

Prof. Dr. Jann Lay

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Course description

This course addresses issues of economic development relevant in the African context. It discusses the current issues and trends in African development as well as the impact of historical legacies. The course covers a wide range of issues, including education, health, rural development and labour markets. It puts emphasis on economic development as structural change and thus also examines trade and integration. It has a strong focus on policy questions. The course language is English.

NOTE: For better planning, we ask students interested in the course to write an email to Francisco Ahumada (francisco.ahumada@giga-hamburg.de) before April 9, 2026. In this email, you should let us know in which program and in which semester you are enrolled in. You may also indicate preferences for the paper that you would like to select for your poster presentation (3 preferences). These will be allocated on a first-come first-serve basis.

Schedule

Mon/Fri between April 13 and May 18

Room:

Mon 08:30 – 10:00 (VG 4.104)

Mon 10:30 – 12:00 (VG 1.106) except May 18 (VG 2.106)

Fri 08:30 – 12:00 (VG 1.105)

Exam (KWZ 0.607)

Weekday	Date	Time (s.t.)	Topic
Monday	13.04.26	8:30-10:00	Introduction
Monday	13.04.26	10.30 – 12.00	Historical legacies
Friday	17.04.26	08.30 – 10.00	Post-independence development
Friday	17.04.26	10.30 – 12.00	Structural adjustment
Monday	20.04.26	08.30 – 10.00	Africa rising
Monday	20.04.26	10.30 – 12.00	How to poster
Friday	24.04.26	08.30 – 10.00	Structural change
Friday	24.04.26	10.30 – 12.00	Q&A (on content and poster)
Monday	27.04.26	08.30 – 10.00	Education, health, and demography
Monday	27.04.26	10.30 – 12.00	Rural development
Monday	04.05.26	08.30 – 10.00	Labor markets
Monday	04.05.26	10.30 – 12.00	Selected cases/studies
Friday	08.05.26	08.30 – 10.00	Trade, investment and regional integration
Friday	08.05.26	10.30 – 12.00	Selected cases/studies
Friday	11.05.26	08.30 – 10.00	Optional date
Friday	11.05.26	10.30 – 12.00	Optional date
Monday	18.05.26	09.00 – 11.00	Exam

Examination and grading

To acquire 6 ECTS, students will have to pass an oral examination of approx. 15 min or a written exam (tbd). The prerequisite to taking the exam is a poster presentation (not graded). In the poster presentation, students will present a poster on a selected paper highlighting key messages of the paper and critically reflect on content, methodology and other relevant aspects of the paper. The students should be able engage in a discussion on the poster with their fellow students. In the oral or written examination, students demonstrate their ability to apply their empirical and theoretical knowledge to questions of African economic development.

Eligibility

The seminar is open to MA students in economics or one of the three business MA programs. Ideally (but not necessarily), you have previously participated in development economics classes.

Mandatory readings (preliminary)

Collier, P., & Gunning, J. W. (1999). Explaining African economic performance. *Journal of Economic literature*, 64-111.

Michalopoulos, S. & Papaioannou, E. (2020). Historical Legacies and African Development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 58(1), pp. 53–128.
doi:10.1257/jel.20181447.

African Union Commission & OECD (2018) Africa's Development Dynamics 2018: Growth, Jobs and Inequalities. OECD (Africa's Development Dynamics).
doi:10.1787/9789264302501-en. Chapter 1.

McMillan, M. & Zeufack, A. (2022). Labor Productivity Growth and Industrialization in Africa. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 36(1), pp. 3–32. doi:10.1257/jep.36.1.3.

Mkandawire, P. T. & Soludo, C. C. (1998). Our continent, our future: African perspectives on structural adjustment. IDRC, Ch. 3, 4.

World Bank (1994). Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results, and the Road Ahead, Ch. 1, 2, 5

Additional papers, including for poster presentation (preliminary)

Historical legacies

Cagé, J., & Rueda, V. (2016). The Long-Term Effects of the Printing Press in Sub-Saharan Africa. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 8 (3), 69–99.

Lechler, M., & McNamee, L. (2018). Indirect Colonial Rule Undermines Support for Democracy: Evidence From a Natural Experiment in Namibia. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51(14), 1858-1898.

Lowes, S. & Montero, E. (2021). Concessions, Violence, and Indirect Rule: Evidence from the Congo Free State, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136 (4), 2047–209.

Michalopoulos, S., and Papaioannou, E. (2016). "The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa." *American Economic Review*, 106 (7), 1802–48.

Nunn, N. (2008). The Long-term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(1), 139–176.

Pascali, L. (2017). The Wind of Change: Maritime Technology, Trade, and Economic Development. *American Economic Review*, 107(9), 2821-54.

Structural change

- Diao, X., Ellis, M., McMillan, M., & Rodrik, D. (2024). Africa's Manufacturing Puzzle: Evidence from Tanzanian and Ethiopian Firms, *The World Bank Economic Review*.
- Mensah, E., Owusu, S. Foster-McGregor, N., Szirmai, A. (2023). Structural Change, Productivity Growth and Labour Market Turbulence in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Journal of African Economies*, 32 (3).

Trade, investment, and regional integration

- Abebe, G., McMillan, M., Serafinelli, M. (2022). Foreign direct investment and knowledge diffusion in poor locations. *Journal of Development Economics* (158).
- Hoekman, B., Sanfilippo, M., & Tambussi, M. (2023). Foreign Direct Investment and Structural Transformation in Africa. *CEPR Press Discussion Paper*, (17838).
- Mendola, M., Prarolo, G., & Sonno, T. (2022) Curse or Blessing? Multinational Corporations and Labor Supply in Africa, *CEPR Discussion Paper No. DP16964*
- Pahl, S., Timmer, M.P., Gouma, R., Woltjer, P. (2019). Jobs in Global Value Chains: New Evidence for Four African Countries in International Perspective, *World Bank Policy research working paper*, 8953.
- Toews, G. & Vezina, P.-L. (2022). Resource Discoveries, FDI Bonanzas, and Local Multipliers: Evidence from Mozambique, *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 104(5), 1046-1058.

Labor markets

- Bahia, K., Castells, P., Cruz, G., Masaki, T., Pedrós, X., Pfitze, T., Rodríguez-Castelán, C., Winkler, H. (2024). The welfare effects of mobile broadband internet: Evidence from Nigeria, *Journal of Development Economics* (170).
- Bandiera, O., Elsayed, A., Smurra, A., Zipfel, C. (2022). Young Adults and Labor Markets in Africa, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 36(1), 81-100.
- Blattman, C., and Dercon. S. (2018). The Impacts of Industrial and Entrepreneurial Work on Income and Health: Experimental Evidence from Ethiopia. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 10 (3), 1–38.
- Hjort, J., & Poulsen, J. (2019). "The Arrival of Fast Internet and Employment in Africa." *American Economic Review*, 109 (3), 1032–79.
- Hardy, M., Kagy, G., Demeke, E., Witte, M., & Meyer, C.J. (2024). The impact of firm downsizing on workers: Evidence from Ethiopia's ready-made garment industry, *World Development*, 176.