Instructor: Vittorio Bassi, Department of Economics, University of Southern California, KAP 106B, Email: vbassi@usc.edu.

Class meeting times: Wednesday 9am-12:20pm in KAP 335.

Office hours: By appointment, please email me.

Course description and objectives
This course will focus on three broad topics in development economics:

1. Labor Markets
2. Firms
3. Attitudes, Culture and Beliefs Formation

The key objectives of this course are to: (i) provide students with an overview of the most recent papers in these research areas; (ii) foster their presentation skills; (iii) encourage the formation of new and original research ideas to be further pursued by students after the end of the course, and potentially leading to a thesis chapter.

To achieve these objectives, we will review a number of papers in the three broad topics mentioned above. The papers will mostly be empirical and will include primarily very recent studies, some of which are not yet published or are at the “revise and resubmit” stage. The starred papers in the Reading List below are required readings. These will be made available by me on Blackboard/Dropbox. Students are required to read the starred papers before coming to class. I will be presenting most of the papers, but students will also be required to present some of the papers in class. Students will also be required to produce and submit a “research project proposal" by the end of the course. Students will be evaluated on both the in-class presentations and the project proposal. More details on the course requirements and assessment procedure are reported below.

Assignments and grading
The graded assignments for the course will be the following:

- Project proposal: Students will be required to develop a new research idea for an original empirical research project, and to describe this in a research proposal. The question of interest need not necessarily be related to any of the topics covered in the course, but should be broadly related to an open question in development economics or at least in applied microeconomics. The proposal should clearly describe: (i) the motivation and research question; (ii) the data; (iii) the empirical strategy, including any threats to identification; (iv) any preliminary data analysis or supporting evidence such as summary stats and basic correlations (not required). The proposal should be 10 pages at most (5
pages minimum) and will need to be turned in to me by email by the end of April. Each student should submit a separate proposal. I will review the proposals and then provide feedback that is intended to help the students move forward with the project after the end of the course.

- **In-class presentations**: Students will be required to present papers in class. The Reading List below indicates which papers will be presented by students. Papers will be assigned to students during the first week of class. These papers will be allocated equally to students, or groups of students depending on the total enrolment in the class. Students will give a 35-40 minute presentation on each assigned paper. The presentations should discuss: (i) the research question, motivation, contribution and relationship to the background literature; (ii) the data; (iii) the empirical strategy; (iv) the main results; (v) conclusions and generalizability; (vi) strengths and weaknesses of the paper. The presentations will be followed by 15-20 minutes of questions from the rest of the class and discussion. The presentations will be graded by me according to the criteria highlighted above.

Students will also be required to give a brief presentation of their own research proposals in the last week of the course. The duration of the project proposal presentations will depend on the number of students enrolled in the course. The structure of the in-class presentation should follow the guidelines described above for the development of the research proposal.

- **Summary slides**: All those students not presenting in a given week will have to write a minimum of six summary slides on each of the papers presented by their colleagues. The slides should have the same structure as the ones used for the in-class presentations, but can be substantially shorter. The slides should be uploaded on Blackboard/Dropbox by the students before the start of the class where the next student presentations are to take place.

- **In-class participation**: Students are expected to contribute to in-class discussion. Each meeting will be 3 hours and 20 minutes. Of these, about 30 minutes each time will be left for questions and discussion within the group.

**Grading**: Project proposal (40%), In-class presentations (30%), Summary slides (20%), In-class participation (10%).

**Remarks**

This is a preliminary version of the syllabus, and so details of the readings/schedule of classes are subject to change.

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to a
TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30AM-5PM, Monday-Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.

Reading List

1. **Labor Markets**
   
a. **Wage determination and general equilibrium effects**
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
b. **Information, search and matching frictions in the labor market**


c. **Returns to skills and the transition into the labor market**


d. Labor returns to asset transfer programs/self-employment opportunities


2. Firms

a. Returns to Capital, Credit and Technology


**b. Returns to labor, investment in training, and hiring practices**


c. **Human resource management and worker productivity**


d. **Managerial practices and returns to business training**


e. The organization of production, markets and misallocation


**Bazzi, S., A. Chari, S. Nataraj and A. D. Rothenberg (2017) "Identifying Productivity Spillovers Using the Structure of Production Networks", mimeo BU.


3. **Attitudes, Culture and Beliefs Formation**


### Schedule of classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Wed Jan 9</th>
<th>VB: Introduction; Foster and Rosenzweig (2008); Muralidharan, K., P. Niehaus and S. Sukhtankar (2018)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students: Bloom, N., R. Sadun and J. Van Reenen (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Wed Apr 24</td>
<td>Students: Presentation of research proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 17</td>
<td>Wed May 1</td>
<td>Students: Presentation of research proposals</td>
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### Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

**Academic Conduct:**
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally
unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

**Student Counseling Services (SCS)** – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* – 1 (800) 273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)* – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

**Sexual Assault Resource Center**
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance* – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

**Bias Assessment Response and Support**
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

**Student Support and Advocacy** – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

**Diversity at USC**
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

**USC Emergency Information**
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu
Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu