

WWS 582d Spring 2004

Instructor: Angus Deaton

Mondays/Wednesdays 2:40 – 4:10 pm



Overview

Topics in Economics

Poverty, inequality & health: Global & national perspectives

Course Outline

This is a course about global and national well-being, with a particular focus on economic well-being, income, and on health. It will be of interest to anyone concerned with poverty, inequality, and health in the United States, as well as to students concerned with the corresponding international issues of global poverty and inequality, growth, and global health in an era of globalization.

We will explore what has happened to poverty, inequality, and health, both in the US, and internationally. Has the era of globalization seen the world becoming richer or poorer, more unequal or less unequal, healthier or unhealthier? What are the links between income, income inequality, and health? We will discuss the conceptual foundations of national and global measures of inequality, poverty, and health, the construction of the measures, and the extent to which they can be trusted. We will explore the links between health and income, why poor people are less healthier and live less long than rich people, whether in the US, between rich and poor countries, or over history, as incomes and health have improved in parallel. We shall also examine the idea that income inequality is itself a health hazard. Did human beings evolve to live in equal societies, and does living in unequal ones harm their health?

What are the policy implications of the relationships between income and health? Should economic policymakers in the US and other rich countries pay more attention to health, for example thinking about the effects of taxes or of welfare on mortality? Are healthcare and health technology overemphasized relative to social factors, such as income, unemployment, income inequality, or racism? Will economic growth be jump-started in poor countries by improving health and health services? Or must better health wait for economic growth? Should the first world help the third world through traditional money-based aid, or through health provision?

Prerequisites: WWS507, WWS511

Grading: There will be two problem sets (15 percent each), a midterm exam (25 percent), and a final exam (45 percent).

Reading: Statistical analysis is one of the keys to the literature, and to separating out good work from bad, so students should be comfortable reading and interpreting quantitative material. There is a substantial amount of reading over a wide range of material. Total reading for the course will be the equivalent of five books and fifty papers: reading will be available on Blackboard well in advance of the beginning of the semester.



Schedule/Classroom Assignment

MW 2:40-4:10 p.m.