



# Course syllabus: The evolution and current debate in development thinking

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[Online course description](#)

## Context and aims

When development economics emerged as an independent field in the post-1945 years, the answer to the question of what development is was rather simple: Development equals GNP growth. On following the current debate, one might suspect that after more than six decades of development studies - with rich and varied outputs - we are back to square one: the achievement of economic growth as a development target is omnipresent and any other issue seems to play only a subordinate role.

But what does that mean for the majority of the world's population living in low-income economies? And, what does it mean for those living in prosperous societies? How much do per capita incomes really say about the developmental state of a society? Why is there oftentimes little correlation between per capita income and other relevant factors such as happiness, life expectancy or literacy rates and what does this mean for the role of business in society? Given the apparent limitations of a singular focus on income to accurately describe the developmental state of a society this course takes a step back and reviews the evolution of development thinking leading right into the current debate. This evolution began with the early growth theories that were revised and expanded to form the modernization theory which soon stood competing over the analytical high ground with the dependency movement. This stimulating discourse was then silenced by the Washington Consensus and, soon after, the post-Washington Consensus. In parallel to and in conflict with the latter two, the last chapter in this evolution unfolded: A radically new, a non-utilitarian approach to development emerged, the capability approach.

The aim of this course is twofold. On one side understanding the underpinnings of these theories within their historical contexts allows participants to gain a deeper understanding of the world and the attempts made to reduce its inequities. Secondly, this course will provide fertile grounds to research and present the impact of development projects designed in accord with the various theoretical frameworks.

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## Course design

This course is designed around two blocks in class with a team assignment between the two blocks. Providing the theoretical framework forms the first block and presentations and discussion of the team based research results the second. This course also offers an optional closing event.

- In the first block of this course participants will receive an introduction to development thinking. This introduction is delivered through a blend of lecturing on the lines of thought that led to the variations in development theory and group discussions about examples of development projects that are grounded in the respective theories. At the end of this block, teams of two to four members will form to undertake their assignments.
- Equipped with this foundational knowledge the teams will independently research a development project, policy or initiative that represents one of the main streams in development thinking. This project will be introduced in a short paper of no more than four pages.
- In the second block the teams will present their research to the group and will be responsible for designing and managing a one hour class on their example. This will include the contextualization of the example and embedding it in the fitting development theory, describing the implementation process and moderating a group discussion on the impact it has generated.
- Logistics permitting a closing event can be organized to visit or receive a representative of a development institution such as an international organization, a national development bank or an NGO engaged in development work.

## Didactics for personal growth

This course is built on enabling and facilitating a joint learning experience creating direct lessons on development thinking as much as a deeper understanding of the world we live in and the role of business therein. By looking at variations in development theory within their historical contexts participants will enhance their

understanding of the challenges we face as a global community, the conditions that lead to the persisting inequities that are equally unjust are they are difficult to overcome and the efforts undertaken to reduce them.. The independently conducted assignments provide a great deal of freedom to the team to research examples that pique the participants' curiosity and create a desire to dig deeper.

The course also provides ample opportunity to refine presentational and team working skills and all participants are called to actively participate throughout the course adopting a supportive role towards the presenting teams during the discussions. In addition an excursion to a development institution or receiving their representative in class will provide the opportunity to interact with development practitioners to reflect on the course in the light of real life experiences in development work.

### **Time frame, schedule and deliverables**

This course can be offered in 20 – 30 classroom hours in two blocks with an optional closing event. First the theoretical foundations will be delivered and the teams formed. Next the teams will independently research a case example that corresponds with one of the main schools in development thinking. The first deliverable is a short paper of no more than four pages on the example and receives a 30% weighing in the final grade. In the second block the results will be presented. This team presentation is embedded in a one hour team-led session including the contextualization and a moderated discussion. It forms the second deliverable which receives a 70% weighing in the final grade. All team members will receive the same final grade.

An optional closing event can be organized to discuss the insights participants have gained in the course with development practitioners.

## Faculty

Dr. Ernst von Kimakowitz is Director and co-founder of the Humanistic Management Center ([www.humanisticmanagement.org](http://www.humanisticmanagement.org)), an independent think-tank, learning institution and non-profit advisory firm. He is also a lecturer in leadership skills at the University of St Gallen, Switzerland, a director of the Humanistic Management Network, co-editor of the Humanism in Business book series at Palgrave Macmillan, advisor to the Impact Investing Platform in São Paulo, Brazil and senior ambassador of the UK based Globalization for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI). Ernst's specializations include corporate responsibility, business and economic ethics, development theory and impact investing.



Ernst von Kimakowitz holds a M.Sc. from the London School of Economics (LSE), UK and has worked in strategy consulting with a leading management consulting firm based in London, England. Subsequently he went to the University of St Gallen in Switzerland where he earned an award winning Ph.D. from the University's Institute for Business Ethics.

Ernst frequently speaks at conferences, lectures at universities around the world and is consulting businesses as well as international organizations on questions regarding corporate social responsibilities, stakeholder engagement and development-conducive business conduct.

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