

Syllabus Poverty and Inequality – Heidelberg University

Winter Term 2026

Name of the Module: Poverty and Inequality

Study programme: M.Sc. Development Economics

Type of Module: Elective Module

Number of ECTS // Workload: 7 ECTS // 210 hours total workload

- Contact hours: 45 hours (equivalent to 4 SWS)
- Independent study: 165 hours (reading, assignments, term paper, preparation of presentation)

Contact hours // Cycle: 4 SWS // Winter term

Type of course: Lecture with applied computer lab and policy simulation components, delivered as 6 half-day block sessions in the first two weeks of the semester, followed by 6 weekly lectures and two afternoons of student presentations

Courses: Poverty and Inequality (6 half-day block sessions in weeks 1–2, 6 weekly lectures, and 2 presentation afternoons)

Curriculum

The course introduces students to the conceptual foundations and empirical measurement of poverty and inequality, and to the links between poverty, inequality, and economic growth. It is organised around four broad blocks: (i) measurement and methodology, covering poverty lines, multidimensional measures, and inequality metrics, with applied Stata sessions; (ii) the growth–inequality–poverty nexus, including long-run determinants of growth, pro-poor growth, and economic mobility; (iii) thematic dimensions of deprivation, including food poverty, gender inequality, climate inequality, and poverty in high-income countries; and (iv) policy responses, including cash transfers, microfinance, behavioural interventions, and policy simulation exercises. The course focuses largely on low- and middle-income countries.

Learning objectives

The students will become acquainted with topics related to poverty alleviation and inequality measurements. They will also learn how to synthesize, interpret regression tables, critically review, and discuss peer-reviewed papers in the field. In addition, students will improve their presentation skills and will learn how to handle feedback and questions from their peers in class.

Assessment

- In-class presentation (15 minutes) on an assigned question/hypothesis from the list below, with class discussion: 30% of final grade
- Written exam (90 minutes): 70% of final grade

Module coordinator: Dr. Angélica Serano, Dr. Johanna Gather. Office hours, **online:** on request via email.

Group ▼									
☐	Day	Date ▼	from ▼	to ▼	Place ▼	Type of Class ▼	Date Type ▼	Comment	Internal note Series
☐	Standardgruppe								
☐	Fri	16.10.2026	16:00	19:00	Übungsraum 00.010 (4310.EG.010)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Sat	17.10.2026	10:00	13:00	Übungsraum 00.010 (4310.EG.010)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Mon	19.10.2026	17:00	19:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Tue	20.10.2026	18:00	20:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Wed	21.10.2026	18:00	20:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Thu	22.10.2026	17:00	19:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Fri	23.10.2026	16:00	19:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Sat	24.10.2026	10:00	13:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Mon	26.10.2026	13:00	15:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		S
☐	Mon	02.11.2026	13:00	15:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		S
☐	Mon	09.11.2026	13:00	15:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		S
☐	Mon	16.11.2026	13:00	15:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		S
☐	Mon	23.11.2026	13:00	15:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		S
☐	Mon	30.11.2026	13:00	15:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		S
☐	Fri	11.12.2026	16:00	19:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		
☐	Fri	18.12.2026	16:00	19:00	Unterrichtsraum 01.030 (4310.01.030)	regular class	confirmed		

Course language: English

Prerequisites: A background in development economics and Stata is helpful.

Reading list

Sen, A., (1988). “The Concept of Development”, in: *Handbook of Development Economics*, Volume 1, H. Chenery and T. N. Srinivasan (eds).

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S. and Robinson, J., (2001). “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation”, in: *American Economic Review*, Volume 91, No. 5, 1369-1401

Chen, S. and Ravallion, M., (2010). “The Developing World is Poorer than We Thought, But No Less Successful in the Fight Against Poverty”, in: *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 125, No. 4, 1577-1625.

Alkire, S. and Foster, J., (2011). “Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement”, in: *Journal of public economics*, Volume 95, No. 7, 476-487.

Kraay, A., 2006. When is growth pro-poor? Evidence from a panel of countries. *Journal of development economics*, 80(1), 198-227.

Burgaz, C., Gorasso, V., Achten, W.M.J. et al. The effectiveness of food system policies to improve nutrition, nutrition-related inequalities and environmental sustainability: a scoping review. *Food Sec.* **15**, 1313–1344 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-023-01385-1>

Dreher, A. and Gaston, N., 2008. Has globalization increased inequality? *Review of International Economics*, 16(3), pp.516-536.

Katz, L.F., Kling, J.R. and Liebman, J.B., 2001. Moving to opportunity in Boston: Early results of a randomized mobility experiment. *The Quarterly Journal*.

Karlan, D. and Zinman, J., (2011). “Microcredit in Theory and Practice: Using Randomized Credit Scoring for Impact Evaluation”, in: *Science*, Volume 332, 1278-1284.

Schultz, T. P. (2004). School subsidies for the poor: evaluating the Mexican Progresa poverty program. *Journal of development Economics*, 74(1), 199-250.

World Bank, 2015. World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior, 1-20. (**Read only the Overview “Human decision making and development policy”**)

Haushofer, J. & Fehr, E. (2014). On the Psychology of Poverty. *Science*, 344 (6186), 862-67.

Haughton and Khandker (2009) – Chapter 6: Inequality Measures, in *Handbook on Poverty and Inequality*, Washington, DC: The World Bank

Sen, A. (1990) More than 100 million women are missing, *The New York review of Books*, 20 Dec. 1990