

BREAD-BIRS Summer School in Development Economics

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The first summer school in analytical development economics organized by the fellows of BREAD (Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development) was hosted by the Banff International Research Station between June 25 and July 1, 2005. BREAD is a non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging research and scholarship in development economics (<http://www.cid.harvard.edu/bread/>). Its members include both leading senior researchers in development economics and younger researchers working on issues of central importance for development. An important aim of BREAD is to foster academic interaction between researchers from different institutions and at different stages of their career, to promote the use of mathematical tools in the analysis of the development process. The BREAD summer school was an extremely important element of this process.

The problems addressed in the field of development economics are some of the most pressing facing researchers in economics today. The methods needed to analyze these problems in a rigorous manner have become increasingly technical. These methods range from mathematical tools developed in contract theory and positive political economy on the one hand to methods of statistical inference developed for evaluation methods ranging from randomized field experiments to estimation of dynamic structural models on the other.

A range of methodological approaches characterizes development economics. The BREAD Summer School is aimed at exposing students, in the formative periods of their research careers, to theoretical and econometric techniques outside that which they are exposed to in their home institutions. This expands and enriches their research capabilities and helps them break into new areas that may not have previously been on their research horizons. Deepening and broadening technical skills is an integral objective of the BREAD Summer School and is a key element of the formation of the students involved.

Over the course of five days, students attended three hours of lectures each morning and three hours of lectures each afternoon. Each three-hour lecture was given by a different BREAD fellow. Lectures covered the most up to date theoretical modelling techniques and empirical methods applied to the central topics in micro-economic development.

Specific lecturers included:

- Empirical Methods by Sendhil Mullainathan (Harvard University)
- Randomized Experiments by Esther Duflo (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
- Land and Credit Markets by Abhijit Banerjee (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
- Markets and Firms by Robin Burgess (London School of Economics)
- Education by Michael Kremer (Harvard University)
- Health and Nutrition by Duncan Thomas (University of California at Los Angeles)

- Technology Adoption and Technological Change by Andrew Foster (Brown University)
- Theories of Inequality by Dilip Mookherjee (Boston University) Political Economy
- Corruption by Rohini Pande (Yale University)

Students also presented their own work in progress and got feedback from faculty. Faculty held office hours where students got the opportunity to discuss their research on a one-on-one basis.

Students' feedback was extremely positive. They were particularly interested by the emphasis on methods and tools. The summer school has contributed to reinforce students' technical skills, and will hopefully contribute to make them ready to apply these skills in their own research.