

Syllabus
Economics of Africa

Bachelor Seminar B.WIWI-VWL.0112

Winter Semester 2026/2027

(as of August 26, 2026; dates and contents subject to change)

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1. General Information

1.1 Course content

This seminar provides a basic understanding and overview of contemporary challenges for sustainable development on the African continent by exploring recent trends of selected macroeconomic and microeconomic issues.

The seminar starts with introductory sessions, where students get an overview of the topics and are equipped with basic data analysis and visualization as well as academic writing skills. Students then work independently on an individually assigned topic and country they choose and prepare their own term paper that meets scientific standards. To allow for interesting comparisons, two participants are always assigned the same topic and research question, but for two different countries. Each participant presents their own work in the seminar and engages in a subsequent critical discussion. During the semester there will be two guest lectures by researchers working on Africa, a mid-term meeting to receive feedback on the outline, and a writing lab and Q&A session.

1.2 Course goals

The aims of this seminar are to

- deepen the knowledge of contemporary challenges for sustainable development on the African continent
- train participants to review the relevant literature, to critically reflect on it, and to undertake their own complementary descriptive/exploratory analysis
- train participants to work with variety of data sources and to visualize them
- train participants to carry out descriptive analyses in Stata or R
- prepare a well-argued piece of research, well written and consistent in format
- present the outcome of this research in class and engage in a discussion with other students
- critically reflect on the research papers of other students
- train participants to engage with guest lectures and formulate questions
- train participants to compare and reflect on how the same research question plays out differently across two contrasting countries

1.3 Prerequisites

None.

1.4 Credit points

6 ECTS-LP.

1.5 Registration

Stud.IP registration: Please register for the course on Stud.IP so that you receive all pertinent information in due time. The number of participants is restricted to 20. Registration is handled on a first-come, first-served basis via Stud.IP. Attendance at the introductory meeting is strongly encouraged to confirm your seminar place. If you are unable to attend, please email kathrin.durizzo@uni-goettingen.de so that we can arrange your registration afterwards.

ECTS-LP registration: Please register via FlexNow by Friday, November 6, 2026.

2. Course overview

2.1 Description of the teaching and learning methods

Students analyze the considerable heterogeneity of the economies that make up the African continent and identify key constraints to and drivers of economic development in comparison to other world regions. They become familiar with current research on the topic, with data sources for economic analysis, and with development experiences relevant to sustainable development strategies within and outside the region. They will be able to present and critically discuss these topics.

By writing an empirical term paper, students demonstrate their ability to review and critically engage with the empirical literature on their topic, and to conduct a descriptive/exploratory analysis (e.g., correlations, descriptive statistics, maps) in Stata or R. Students first establish the broader pattern across African countries before focusing on their individually chosen country, relate their findings to the literature, and derive economic policy conclusions. By presenting the term paper, students demonstrate their ability to defend, and to critically reflect upon, their own work. Students will have the possibility to discuss problems and share experiences with their ongoing project in a mid-term session and in a Q&A slot.

Additionally, seminar participants must demonstrate the ability to visualize important information. By discussing data sources and visualizations, they show the ability to make research information accessible to a non-academic audience and easy to read.

The seminar participants will also get a refresher on academic writing. Basic command of R and Stata is recommended; as a refresher, the Chair of Development Economics and Global Political Economy offers a self-study module for [R](#) and [Stata](#). The course language is English.

2.2 Individual work with paired topic assignment

Each term paper is written individually and graded individually. However, topics are assigned in pairs: two participants are always given the same topic from the list in Section 4, together with a fixed research question. Within each pair, participants choose their own country, coordinating with their partner so that they each analyze a different country — ideally one that offers an interesting contrast on the topic at hand (e.g., for fertility, a country at an early stage of the demographic transition vs. one at a more advanced stage), so that the two individual papers, once finished, reveal an interesting contrast rather than simply repeating the same pattern twice.

Because both participants in a pair work on the same research question and dataset, but for different countries, they may exchange views on data access and methodological questions. However, the write-up, the descriptive analysis, and the interpretation must be produced independently by each participant; close similarity in wording or structure between the two papers will be treated as a plagiarism concern.

The draft outline (December 4) and the term paper (February 12) are submitted individually. Each participant presents individually at the mid-term meeting and at the final presentation. Peer reviews of other participants' outlines (see Section 2.3) are prepared individually as well.

2.3 Schedule

Introductory Meeting (Friday, October 30, 2026, 12:00 – 14:00, [online](#))

- Introduction of the course
- Discussion of organizational and administrative questions

Lecture 1 (Thursday, November 12, 2026, 14:00-18:00, Waldweg 26 Altbau 0.702)

- Input topics

Lecture 2 (Friday, November 13, 2026, 10:00-14:00, MZG/Blauer Turm 9.111)

- Literature and academic writing
- Data and visualization

Guest Lecture 1 (Friday, November 27, 2026, 12:00-14:00, online)

- Please prepare at least one question during the presentation in the google doc.

Deadline for draft outline with one descriptive visualization (Friday, December 4, 2026, 23:55)

- Please upload an electronic version of your draft outline and introduction (about 1.5 pages of introduction, plus one descriptive visualization) in a PDF format on Stud.IP. Each participant will prepare two short critical reviews of two assigned drafts for the mid-term meeting (no written version needed).

Mid-term Meeting 1 (Friday, December 11, 2026, 10:00-16:00, VG 2.105)

- Each seminar participant presents with slides (not more than five) their draft outlines. Each seminar participant comments on two draft outlines and introductions from his/her colleagues. No slides are required for the discussion of other drafts. Discussions of other draft outlines and introductions should not exceed 2 minutes. A maximum of 10 minutes is allotted for the following open Q&A session and feedback per outline. Optional bilateral Q&As after the meeting.

Guest Lecture 2 (Friday, January 15, 2027, 12:00-14:00, online)

- Please prepare at least one question during the presentation in the google doc.

Writing lab and Q&A (Friday, January 22, 2027, 12:00-14:00, VG 2.106)

- We will briefly discuss common mistakes in academic writing, followed by dedicated time for each participant to continue working on their term paper.
- Each seminar participant will have time to send questions to kathrin.durizzo@uni-goettingen.de by January 15th and then discuss them during an assigned slot in the Lab and Q&A session. Spontaneous questions will be answered on a first come first served basis.

Final meeting Day 1 & 2 (Thursday, January 28, 2027, 12:00-16:00, Waldweg 26 Altbau 1.201 and Friday, January 29, 2027, 10:00-16:00, VG 4.105)

- Each seminar participant will present their term paper. Depending on group size, presentations will last about 15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of Q&A and feedback.

Deadline final term paper (Friday, February 26, 2027, 23:55)

- Please upload an electronic version of your final term paper (max. 10 pages) in a PDF format to Stud.IP. All final papers will be made available on Stud.IP.

2.3 Examination and grading of the module

The grading consists of two components:

- Term paper [60%]
- Presentation of term paper [40%]
- Furthermore, in order to pass, participants must
 - o comment on two draft outlines in the mid-term meeting
 - o be present and actively participate during all seminar dates and in the guest lectures
 - o submit all written requirements (draft outline and term paper) in time

Each participant is graded individually on their own term paper and presentation. Although two participants share the same topic, research question, and dataset, they are assessed independently and may receive different grades.

2.4 Course materials

The readings will be announced in the introductory meeting. Supplementary course materials will be announced at the beginning of each meeting and/or published on Stud.IP.

3. Term paper requirements

3.1 Outline

The outline should be no longer than 1.5 pages with font size 12 and line spacing 1.5 times, alignment: justification, margin (right, left, top and bottom margin): 2.5 cm each. It should briefly describe the research question the seminar participant wishes to study and the data and methods they intend to use for the descriptive analysis. Additionally, seminar participants should already

create one descriptive visualization of the data they intend to use that shows an important point of their research question. The visualization should be exported on one page with a five-sentence description, explaining why it is important.

3.2 Term paper

The term paper must address the following five elements, reflecting the competencies of this module:

- Introduction: situate the assigned topic as a sustainable development challenge (e.g., with reference to a relevant SDG) and briefly compare the assigned country to other world regions on the indicator(s) of interest.
- Literature review: summarize and engage with the empirical literature relevant to the topic.
- Data and descriptive/exploratory analysis: present the assigned research question, data, and descriptive analysis (e.g., correlations, maps, descriptive statistics) for the assigned country.
- Discussion: evaluate how the descriptive findings relate to, confirm, or diverge from the empirical literature, and draw conclusions from this comparison.
- Policy conclusions: develop economic policy conclusions that follow from the analysis and the literature.

The term paper is a short essay and must not exceed 10 pages. Main tables and main figures factor into the page count. The cover sheet, table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, bibliography and the appendix are excluded from the page count.

Please use the following formatting: Font size: 12 pt, line spacing: 1.5 times, alignment: justification, margin (right, left, top and bottom margin): 2.5 cm each. Appendices may provide details of the empirical approach, data sources, or some background tables and figures. Tables and figures that are essential for the research paper need to be included in the main text. Please make sure that you are consistent in your referencing and bibliography.

Use a reference style that is in line with basic conventions in the economics literature. Always quote within a work using the same method. The Chair recommends the in-text author-year citation style (see, for example, information sheet "Citation according to the Harvard system"). All sources that you have cited in the text must appear in the reference list. Everything that you have only read but not cited in the text must NOT appear in the reference list.

A good term paper implies a clear initial presentation of the research question. Relevant concepts and theoretical approaches need to be adequately discussed. If applicable, the methodological choices need to be justified. The analysis needs to focus on the research question. The paper should end with a well-argued synthesis that supports the conclusions. A good research paper is also fluently written and is consistent in its form. Term papers need to be written in English. The work must be done independently by the student.

Every idea, statement or fact taken from the literature or any other sources must be appropriately cited. Quotes need to be indicated as such. Plagiarism is sanctioned with the grade 5 (failed). The general rules of the Faculty of Business and Economics apply. A signed declaration must be attached to each scientific work: "I hereby declare that I wrote this thesis paper independently, without assistance from external parties, and without use of other resources than those indicated. All

information taken from other publications or sources in text or in meaning are duly acknowledged in the text. I give my consent to have this thesis checked by plagiarism software.”

Additionally, please attach a declaration if you have used AI-based chatbots such as ChatGPT. Sample annex:

Declaration on the use of ChatGPT and comparable tools: In this paper, I have used ChatGPT or another AI tool as follows.:

- ☐ not at all
- ☐ during brainstorming
- ☐ when creating the outline
- ☐ to write individual passages, altogether to the extent of ...% of the entire text
- ☐ for the development of source code
- ☐ for optimizing or restructuring source code
- ☐ for proofreading or optimizing
- ☐ further, namely: ...

I hereby declare that I have stated all uses completely. Missing or incorrect information will be considered as an attempt to cheat.

3.3 Replication files

Please upload all files necessary for replicating your empirical analysis to Stud.IP together with your submission (or gwdg owncloud for larger files). Your empirical analysis is considered replicable if all results used in your paper (regression tables, figures, etc.) can be generated from the raw data using your code scripts. Your submission should include the following files:

- all raw data
- the merged dataset
- code to clean and merge the raw data
- code to analyze the data
- a short instruction for the replication, e.g., a README file or Makefile

The raw data should be marked as such and stored in a separate folder. The merged dataset should be saved in a common format (e.g., csv, dta, rds). Please make sure that your code can be executed outside your own computer without further adjustments to the code. For that reason, please use relative file paths only. Add comments to specify which part of the code corresponds to which part of your paper.

Please plan enough time for uploading your files, especially if using GWDG owncloud or if your files are large. Upload difficulties are not accepted as an excuse for a late submission.

4. Topics

Topics will be presented in the introductory meeting. A preliminary list is:

1. **Conflicts**
2. **Fertility**
3. **Digitalization**
4. **Growth potential**
5. **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**
6. **Informality**
7. **Disease burden**
8. **Aid retrenchment**
9. **Social protection**
10. **Gender and entrepreneurship**
11. **Inequality and growth**
12. **Resource curse**