

MELISSA DELL

Contact Information

Department of Economics
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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Graduate Studies

PhD Candidate Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007 – present
MPhil Economics, Oxford University, with Distinction, 2007

Undergraduate Studies

AB Economics, Harvard University, *summa cum laude*, 2005.

Honors and Scholarships

2007 National Science Foundation, Graduate Research Fellowship
2007 First Place, The Econometric Game (European-wide competition, member of the Oxford team)
2006 Thomas Hoopes Prize for Senior Honors Thesis (university wide)
2005 - 2007 Rhodes Scholarship
2005 John Williams Prize – Best Undergraduate Harvard Student in Economics
2005 Seymour Harris Prize – Best Undergraduate Harvard Thesis in Economics
(for “Widening the Border: The Impact of NAFTA on the Female Labor Force in Mexico”)
2005 USA Today Academic All American 1st Team
2004 Harry S. Truman Scholarship
2004 Named by *Glamour* Magazine as one of America’s top ten college female role models
2004 *Sports Illustrated* A List (for varsity track and cross-country)

Teaching Experience

Spring 2007 Instructor, Undergraduate Monetary Theory (Oxford University)

Professional Activities

Referee for *Econometrica*, *American Economic Review*, *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*
Conference Presentations: World Bank/IZA Conference on Labor and Development (Berlin, 2006)

Publications

“Temperature and Income: Reconciling New Cross-Sectional and Panel Estimates” (with Ben Jones and Ben Olken). Forthcoming *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*.

Beyond the Neoclassical Growth Model: Technology, Human Capital, Institutions, and Within Country Differences (with Daron Acemoglu). Forthcoming *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*

The College Matters Guide. (with Joanna Chan and Jacquelyn Kung) McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, 2004. (Book on college admissions geared towards underserved students, featured on the back-to-school display of all Barnes & Noble bookstores).

Working Papers

“The Mining *Mita*: Explaining Institutional Persistence”

This study utilizes regression discontinuity to examine the long run impacts of the *mita*, an extensive forced mining labor system in effect in Peru and Bolivia between 1573 and 1812. Results indicate that a *mita* effect lowers household consumption by 32 percent in subjected districts today. Using data from the Spanish Empire and Peruvian Republic to trace channels of institutional persistence, I show that the *mita*’s influence has persisted through its

impacts on land tenure and public goods provision. *Mita* districts historically had fewer large landowners and lower educational attainment. Today, they are less integrated into road networks, and their residents are substantially more likely to be subsistence farmers.

“Climate Change and Economic Growth: Evidence from the Last Half Century” (with Ben Jones and Ben Olken)

This paper uses the annual variations in temperature and precipitation over the past 50 years to examine the impact of climactic changes on economic activity throughout the world. We find three primary results. First, higher temperatures substantially reduce economic output in poor countries but have little effect in wealthier countries.. Second, higher temperatures appear to reduce the rate of economic growth in poor countries, rather just the level of economic activity. Third, higher temperatures in poor countries reduce not only agricultural output, but also lead to reduced growth in industrial output, lower investment growth, and political instability. Each of these results calls into question basic assumptions of the “Integrated Assessment Models” that form the bases of current policy prescriptions.

Public Service

Founder (2004) and Adviser (2006 – present) – A Drop in the Ocean (www.adropintheocean.org). Non-profit organization linking university students with microfinance NGOs. Aims to help students develop skills learned in the classroom through service.

Founder (2004) – The College Matters Scholarship Fund (www.cmscholar.org). Provides scholarships and information on higher education to underserved students.

Conducted impact evaluation studies for Pro Mujer Peru (2003), a microfinance NGO serving over 14,000 women, and EMCOP Peru (2004, 2005), a smaller grassroots microfinance organization.