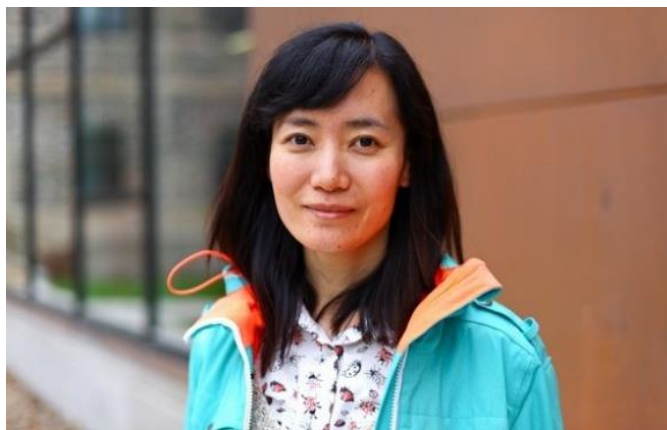


# EconMatters

## Faculty Profile - Meet Professor Zhou

My name is Weina Zhou. I am an Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics. I hold a PhD in Economics from the University of British Columbia. I began my work here at Dalhousie in 2013. I enjoy my life in Halifax, but most importantly, I love my job!



My journey to become professor has not been an easy one however. Indeed, professorship was unimaginable for me when I was a teenager. I was born in Shanghai, China. For family reasons, at age 15, I relinquished the opportunity to study at a local elite high school and attended a vocational school instead. The course I enrolled in trained students to become receptionists or secretaries, with a focus on Japanese. After graduating from the vocational school, I worked as a receptionist for two years, accumulating enough funds to take me to Japan. My goal was very clear; I wanted to study in Japan, at a university. During the course of my first year there, I attended a Japanese language school in the morning, pored over Japanese high school textbooks in the afternoon, and worked at a noodle shop in the evening. I taught myself mathematics, physics, chemistry, and English so as to sit for the university entrance examinations in Japan. After a year of hard work, I was accepted at my dream university, the Tokyo Institute of Technology. I still remember the moment I saw my name on the list of accepted students and how my mother, meeting me at the airport, cried at seeing the amount of weight I had lost during that one year in Japan.

My major at the Tokyo Institute of Technology was in Social Engineering. Economics was only a small part of my major. Although my exposure to Economics at the undergraduate level was minimal, a book and a professor changed the course of my entire career path. The book was titled *Freakonomics*. I was fascinated by the empirical work discussed in this book and how data can uncover truths. My undergraduate supervisor, Professor Ryuichi Tanaka, showed me the tools: Econometrics. Now, I am teaching Econ3338 Introductory Econometrics at Dalhousie. I feel so overjoyed to be teaching this course, and each year, I devote much effort to it. I truly believe this course to be one of the most useful for students no matter whether they choose industry or academics in the future.

One of my main research agenda foci is the Send-down movement (1968-1978) during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The Send-down movement forced more than 16 million urban teenagers to move to rural areas to carry out hard agricultural field work. The experience was most difficult for the send-down youths. Many of them had never been in rural areas and had never before left their parents, yet here they were working as long as 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. My research finds interesting outcomes of resilience on the part of those youths. After the Cultural Revolution, when the send-downs returned to urban areas, they were more likely to upgrade their education; some of them came to earn higher incomes compared to those who were not sent to rural areas. This research work began while I was at UBC. One of my thesis committee members and my mentor, Professor Ashok Kotwal, said to me one day, "You are a sent-down girl." I smiled.

## Alumni Profiles

### Katie Tinker (MDE 2011)

My name is Katie Tinker, and I graduated from the MDE Program in the summer of 2011.

I chose the MDE program because I wanted to work in a development-related profession. At the same time, I wanted to develop a greater understanding of the forces that shape human societies, and what leads some populations to struggle with poverty and instability, while others flourish.

The job I landed after I finished my degree was with the Halifax Refugee Clinic. It was not strictly in the field of Economics, but it was very much development-related. The Clinic is a local not-for-profit organization, established in 2000, whose mandate is to provide free legal and settlement services to people who are making refugee claims in Canada and can't afford to pay for a lawyer. In Nova Scotia, unlike in many other provinces, there is no legal aid available for immigration cases, so our tiny organization is the only place our clients have to turn. We have just three full-time staff – myself, our Executive Director and our Settlement Coordinator – so during the busier times it can get pretty overwhelming!



I started off as a Research Assistant for the legal team. My job was to gather documentary evidence to support our clients' cases as they prepared to have their claims heard and decided before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. However, the small size of our organization means we all play multiple roles, and I very quickly progressed to handling many other aspects of the legal casework, alongside and under the guidance of our ED and the volunteer lawyers we work with. My title eventually evolved to Legal Case Manager.

It was a bit of a crash course in immigration law. And it was – and still is – work that can be incredibly difficult, emotionally draining and stressful. But it is also endlessly challenging and fascinating, and the people I've had the privilege to meet over the last few years have taught me and inspired me in so many different ways.

Working at the HRC took me in a direction I couldn't have predicted, and introduced me to a part of Canadian society that I knew very little about as a student. But I often reflect on how the things I learned during my time in the MDE program inform my perspective on the work I do now. As a student, I wrote papers about economic collapse, the importance of institutions in fostering stability and growth. Now, I see up close what those concepts mean for the people who endure the consequences. I see people who grew up in societies they thought were stable, and listen to them as they describe what it's like to watch the life they knew disappear before their very eyes. Some of them have lost their homes, others family members.

I find myself wishing, often, that everyone could know what I know now as a result of doing this work. With the refugee crisis becoming ever more visible in the world, we often hear about how no one flees their home unless they have to. I wish that more people understood just how true that was. I wish more people knew how hard it is to make a refugee claim successfully in Canada, and how many flaws there are in our refugee determination system, even though we have one of the fairer systems in the world. I wish they knew how much people risk and how much they sacrifice when they enter this process. And I wish that everyone understood just how much these remarkable people contribute to our society in so many ways.

If you make your home in Nova Scotia, you'll no doubt eventually cross paths with someone who was once a refugee claimant, and a former HRC client - though you may not realize it. Maybe you already have!

## **Lama Alaraj (BA 2016)**

My name is Lama Alaraj and I am a recent Economics graduate from Dalhousie University. I was born in Palestine. I moved to Abu Dhabi to start high school. After high school I chose to pursue my undergraduate commerce degree at Dalhousie. My father encouraged my decision and I was happy to have the chance to see my sister who was entering the last year of her undergraduate degree.

After my first semester at Dalhousie I quickly came to the conclusion that commerce was not the choice for me. I was not interested in the profit driven environment and found myself still wanting to learn about the world. The following semester I enrolled in first year International Development courses and declared my major in International Development Studies (IDS). As consequences of my disinterest in studying during my first semester, I had to retake first year microeconomics. From this experience, I managed to find a significant silver lining; I fell in love with economics again. During high school, economics was my favorite subject and the intuition came to me naturally, so I decided to enroll in economics courses at Dalhousie. The other side of this silver lining was what I was learning in Economics was so relevant to my IDS degree. The two disciplines complimented each other very well. IDS opened me to the global social problems we are facing, and Economics gave a fundamental solution to these societal paradoxes. During my four years at Dalhousie, I gained so much knowledge about both the social and the financial world.

After completing my undergraduate degree, I moved to Palestine to work for my Dad's Architectural and Engineering firm, through which I gained experience in quality control and analysis. I learned how a business operates in an economy that depends primarily on tourism. I also learned that a business is hard to operate when individual interests are in conflict. When trying to run a business in a low-income economy, the main incentive of all parties included tends to be money and people tend to forget about the efficiency with operating it and the hard work that goes into it.

Currently, I am working towards applying for a Master's Degree in Economics. I am taking extra courses at Dalhousie to raise my GPA, and I am hoping to volunteer in an NGO during the winter. I would really like to pursue a Master's Degree in Economics because not only do I love this field, but I really want to be able to get the chance to engage in economic development in a struggling country. Having come from a country that is ridden with political strife and economic isolation, I want the chance to take part in implementing a policy that can make at least a single change in a suffering country.

My goals for the next five years will be to have established myself in a role that is relative to economic policy in the field of international development. I hope to do this through primarily working with international NGOs that that focus on microfinance as a proactive way to liberalize individuals living in countries that suffer politically, economically and socially.

## Professional Advisory Council (PAC)

The Dal Econ PAC is a platform to assemble the Professionals who are Alumni of Dal Econ Department. The PAC strives to keep Alumni connected, engaged and updated about the achievements of Dalhousie's Economics Department. The PAC provides valuable networking in industries like Financial Services, Consulting, Think Tanks, NGO's and Government.

## Professor Ian McAllister - keynote speaker at CEA

Ian McAllister, retired economics professor, was the keynote speaker at the Progressive Economics Forum. The Forum was held as part of the Canadian Economics Association Annual conference on Saturday, June 3rd. Professor McAllister spoke on "From Disaster Relief to Development."

## Grants

Tumennasan have been awarded SSHRC Insight Development Grant.

Lars Osberg (joint with D.S.Rao, K.K. Tang, P.K. Trivedi, N.Rohde and X. Ramos) has received Australian Research Council Discovery Grant for the project "Inequality of Opportunity in Australia."

## Publications

Andrea Guisto and Talan Iscan published "Market Power and the Aggregate Saving Rate" in Macroeconomic Dynamics.

Lars Osberg, Nick Rohde, Prasada Rao, and K.K. Tang published "Is It Vulnerability or Economic Insecurity that Matters for Health?" in Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization.

## Awards

Congratulations to the students who received awards/prizes this past spring.

## Upcoming Events

Kevin Milligan, University of British Columbia will be the speaker for the [John F Graham Memorial Lecture 2017](#). The annual public lecture will be held Nov 30, 2017 at 3:30 pm in the Great Hall, University Club, with a reception following in the dining room. **All are welcome.**

[Economics Seminars](#) are generally held in McCain Arts and Social Sciences Building, Room 2198 from 2:30 pm–4:00 pm on Friday afternoons.

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