Joseph Melkonian

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Education

Harvard University — Cambridge, MA
PhD in Public Policy (Economics Track) — Expected May 2027

University of California, Davis — Davis, CA
B.A. Economics, with Highest Honors — June 2019
B.A. International Relations, with Honors

Fields

Applied Microeconomics | **Labor** | **International Development**

References

Gordon Hanson
Professor in Urban Policy
Harvard Kennedy School
gordon_hanson@hks.harvard.edu

Rema Hanna
Professor of South-East Asia Studies
Harvard Kennedy School
rema_hanna@g.harvard.edu

Gabriel Kreindler
Assistant Professor of Economics
Harvard University
gkreindler@g.harvard.edu

Fellowships

Herbert C. Kelman Fellow, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University — 2026–27
Doctoral Fellow, Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative — 2025–26

Conference Presentations

41st Meeting of the European Economic Association, University College Dublin, Ireland — August 2026
European Development in a Historical Perspective – Ph.D. & Postdoctoral Conference, Harvard — May 2026
19th International Conference on Migration and Development, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea — April 2026

Grants & Research Support

Graduate Student Associate Research Grant, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs — 2026
Mid-Dissertation Grant, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University — 2026
Urban Research Grant, Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative — 2025
Urban Research Grant, Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative & Mahindra Humanities Center — 2025
Research Scholars Program, Harvard Center for International Development — 2024–25
Foreign Language and Area Studies Grant (Moroccan Arabic), Harvard Center for African Studies — 2022

Job Market Paper

Shock Propagation through Migrant Networks: Evidence from the Ecuador-Spain Corridor

International migration entails human and financial flows that can expose low-income communities to foreign economic risks as well as opportunities. This paper studies the Ecuador-Spain corridor during the Global Financial Crisis to investigate the impact of foreign labor market shocks on migrant origin communities. I leverage international survey and census data to craft an emigrant shift-share instrument estimating subnational Ecuadorian exposure to Spanish regional labor market downturns. Spanish shocks propagate to Ecuador, with more exposed Ecuadorian regions experiencing significant reductions in remittance inflows and increases in return migration. Spanish labor demand shocks impact Ecuadorian labor markets, as employment rates increase for women and self-employment rates increase for men, suggesting Ecuadorian households responded to negative remittance income shocks by increasing labor supply.

Papers in Progress

Emigration by Exodus: Minorities and Development in North African Decolonization
I investigate the near-universal emigration of Sephardic Jewish minorities and European colonists surrounding North African decolonization as natural experiments related to the impact of emigration on development, leveraging archival census tabulations and contemporary survey and census microdata from Morocco and Tunisia.

Migration and "Global Socialization" in the Middle East and North Africa
I investigate the relationship between emigrant networks and cultural norms in the MENA context using a subnational migration matrix based on the Facebook Social Connections Index and standardized Arab Barometer survey data. I find that emigration to Western countries is significantly related to more progressive gender attitudes on higher education and female employment outside the home.

Research Experience

Malcolm Weiner Center for Social Policy (HKS), Research Assistant, Gordon Hanson — Cambridge, MA
- Conducted housing and regional labor analyses using Census and ACS microdata. — 2023–26

Evidence for Policy Design & Morocco Employment Lab, Research Assistant, Rema Hanna — Morocco
- Interim project manager on a team running a nationally representative household survey. — 2022

Insurance Initiative, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Research Assistant, Richard Rosen — Chicago, IL
- Contributed to policy briefs, chart books, and research on the insurance industry. — 2019–21

Teaching Experience

Economics of Migration in MENA, Harvard College, Sole Instructor — 2025–26
- Designed and taught small writing class on migration economics in the Middle East and North Africa.

Intermediate Microeconomics, Harvard College, TA and Head Proctor for Dr. Maxim Boycko — 2023–25
- Introduced new testing procedures and grading technology, supported microeconomics instruction.

Introduction to Econometrics, Harvard College, TA for Dr. Gregory Bruich — 2024
- Hosted discussion sections and office hours, supported econometrics instruction for causal inference.

Academic Service

Coordinator, Graduate Student Workshop in Economic and Social Policy, Harvard Kennedy School — 2023–24
Coordinator, Graduate Student Workshop in Political Economy & Rational Choice, Harvard University — 2022–23

Affiliations

Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, Graduate Student Associate

Harvard Center for International Development, PhD Affiliate

European Economic Association, Member

American Economic Association, Member

Skills and Other

Software: STATA, LaTeX
Languages: English (Native), French (Advanced), Moroccan Arabic (Intermediate)
Citizenship: USA