



# Trade and Development Seminar

## The Impact of Early Marriage on Women's Employment in the Middle East and North Africa

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**10:30 am – 12:00 pm**

**119 Ruttan Hall**

Marriage is a central stage in the transition to adulthood in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This paper builds on the existing literature on the effect of marriage on women's employment in MENA. Besides examining how different types of work are affected by early marriage (defined as marriage by the median age of marriage) in a multivariate setting, the contribution of this paper is to endogenize the marriage decision using an instrumental variable approach. We find that marriage by the median age reduces the probability of working for women by 47 percent in Jordan, 33 percent in Tunisia and 16 percent in Egypt. Much of the effect is due to a reduction in the probability of private wage work, which is reduced by 76 percent in Jordan, 57 percent in Tunisia and 40 percent in Egypt. Differences emerge across the three countries in the extent to which self-employment after marriage is available to women to compensate for the reduction in wage employment opportunities. (with Caroline Krafft)