



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences

Course syllabus

PPPE 6301: Political-Economic Theories

August 2024

Course overview

Course number: [PPPE 6301](#)
Course title: Political-Economic Theories
Term: Fall 2025
Meetings: Tuesdays 07:00 pm – 09:45 pm @ [ECSW 2.325](#)

Contact information

Professor: Dr. Elías Cisneros
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Office: [GR 3.230](#)
Office hours: Monday, 12–3 pm (appointments via email)

General course information

Course description: This course provides a comprehensive examination of political-economic theory, exploring foundational and contemporary perspectives on key issues such as voting behavior, electoral systems, political accountability, and the role of social networks in shaping political outcomes. The course integrates theoretical insights with practical applications, to enhance critical evaluation of the dynamics of political and economic systems.

Pre-requisites: There are no prerequisites, but it is desirable to have had at least one undergraduate-level economics course and a general understanding of regression analysis.¹ Furthermore, students may need some mathematical and graphical skills to analyze economic problems, but the level of the analytical components of the course will be determined by the background of the enrolled students.

Learning outcomes and objectives The lecture has the goal to train the critical analysis of empirical papers in the context of political economy and to think about empirical research designs in a structured way.

1. Students will deepen their knowledge on political economic theories.
2. Students will be able to translate theoretical hypotheses into econometric strategies.
3. Students will develop analytical and research skills to critically evaluate empirical research in the context of political economy.
4. Students will be able to think about empirical research designs in a structured way.

¹For example, any of the following courses would more than cover the basic needs: (a) EPPS 7313 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics, (b) EPPS 7316 Regression and Multivariate Analysis, (c) PPPE 6342 Research Design II.

5. Students will learn to effectively communicate and present a research plan, strategy, and results in public.
6. Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking by developing a research question and writing a research design paper.

Texts & materials This is a reading course on Political Economy for graduate students. Based on recently published empirical papers, it investigates various dimensions along which economics and politics interact. Besides discussing the policy implications of the analysed empirical results, the course will pay special attention to causal identification.

The lecture plan contains required readings marked with a “*” (one per lecture). Additional literature is further listed in the lecture plan or will be referred to in each lecture but does not constitute required readings. During the course, we will focus on the theoretical contributions and the details of empirical strategies and prioritize analytical depth over breadth.

To level the econometric skills, the lecture plan also includes tutorials that introduce and discuss the main econometric methods of causal identification (RCT, RDD, diff-in-diff, IV). In addition, we encourage you to consult the following online material and books that are well-suited for self-study:

- Introductory videos for beginners: Linear Regression ([Correlation and Causation](#), [How to interpret Regression Tables](#)), Instrumental Variables ([IV series](#), first four videos), Regression Discontinuity Design ([RDD series](#), first three videos), Difference in Difference ([DiD](#), [Trends](#)), Fixed Effect ([Individual FE](#), [FD/FE](#))
- More advanced book (*highly recommended*): Cunningham, S. (2021): *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Yale University Press. ISBN 9780300251685, <https://mixtape.scunning.com/>.
- Book for beginners: Huntington-Klein, N. (2021): *The Effect: An Introduction to Research Design and Causality*, volume 1. New York: Chapman and Hall/CRC. ISBN 9781003226055, <https://theeffectbook.net/>.
- A more standard book providing a very nice overview of general identification issues: Angrist, J. D. and J.-S. Pischke (2008): *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton University Press. ISBN 0691120358.
- From a policy evaluation perspective: Khandker, S. R., G. B. Koolwal, and H. A. Samad (2010): *Handbook on impact evaluation: quantitative methods and practices*. World Bank Publications, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/...>

Course grading

Details on what is expected for each assignment will be discussed in class. The document *rw_assignment-guidelines.pdf* (on the Box) provides brief descriptions of the assignments and evaluation rubrics.

1. **Participation (15%)**: Students are expected to actively participate in class each week. Students should come into class able to summarize the relevant arguments in the readings for the week while also providing substantive critiques of the theoretical and empirical strategies of the authors. Missing an excessive number of classes will result in a reduction in your grade.
2. **Mid-term exam (20%)**: The mid-term exam will consist of a paper analysis. The exam will take place online via eLearning.
3. **Academic paper presentation (20%)**: Presentation of essential part of an assigned research paper. Eligible papers are listed in the *Topics left aside* section. Presentations of 15 min, 5 slides.
4. **Main assignment (45%)** The grade consists of submitting an *exposé* (research plan) (20% of the total grade) and a *final paper* (25% of the total grade). In single cases, the exposé submission can be substituted by an in-class presentation.

- (a) Master's students:
 - i. **Literature review:** Conduct a literature review on a topic related to the topic of the course.
- (b) Ph.D. students:
 - i. **Research design proposal:** Develop an empirical research design related to the topic of the course.

Tentative schedule

W	Date	Topics
1	08/26	Introduction & Syllabus
2	09/02	Empirical Intro I: RCT & RDD
3	09/09	Empirical Intro II: FE/DiD & IV
4	09/16	Political preferences I: Populism and Redistribution
5	09/23	Reasons to vote I: Benefits and Costs
6	09/30	Mid-term exam
7	10/07	Reasons to vote II: Context
8	10/14	Electoral process I: Quotas and other rules
9	10/21	Electoral process II - Fraud and Accountability
10	10/28	Academic paper presentations
11	11/04	Returns to politics I - Elites, nepotism, favoritism
12	11/11	Social Networks I - Trust in government; Submit exposé
13	11/18	Social Networks II - Protests
–	11/25	Fall break
14	12/02	The political economy of land-use change
15	12/09	Final assignment

Course outline

Successful course participation requires reading all listed material marked with a “*” or “**” — *before class*. Readings marked with a † were required readings in previous years.

1. 08/26 Introduction & Syllabus

- * Guideline on writing term papers
- Todos:
 - Syllabus discussion
 - Sign up for academic paper presentations
 - Intro to how to read papers
 - Social gathering after class
 - **Homework: Watch introductory videos to empirical research**

2. 09/02 Empirical Intro I: RCT & RDD

- * Vicente, P. C. (2014): Is vote buying effective? Evidence from a field experiment in West Africa. *Economic Journal* 124 (574): F356–F387
- Duflo, E., R. Glennerster, and M. Kremer (2007): *Chapter 61 Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit*, pp. 3895–3962. Elsevier
- Imbens, G. and K. Kalyanaraman (2011): Optimal bandwidth choice for the regression discontinuity estimator. *The Review of Economic Studies* 79 (3): 933–959
- Lee, D. S. and T. Lemieux (2010): Regression discontinuity designs in economics. *Journal of Economic Literature* 48 (2): 281–355
- Imbens, G. W. and T. Lemieux (2008): Regression discontinuity designs: A guide to practice. *Journal of Econometrics* 142 (2): 615–635

- Todos
 - **Homework: Analyze old mid-term exams**
- 3. 09/09 **Empirical Intro II: FE/DiD & IV**
 - ** Adena, M., R. Enikolopov, M. Petrova, V. Santarosa, and E. Zhuravskaya (2015): Radio and the rise of the nazis in prewar germany. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130 (4): 1885–1939
 - ** Manacorda, M. and A. Tesei (2020): Liberation technology: Mobile phones and political mobilization in africa. *Econometrica* 88 (2): 533–567
 - Bertrand, M., E. Duflo, and S. Mullainathan (2002): How much should we trust differences-in-differences estimates? Working Paper 8841, National Bureau of Economic Research
- 4. 09/16 **Political preferences I - Populism and Redistribution**
 - ** Dal Bó, E., F. Finan, O. Folke, T. Persson, and J. Rickne (2022): Economic and social outsiders but political insiders: Sweden’s populist radical right. *The Review of Economic Studies* 90 (2): 675–706
 - ** Dahlberg, M., K. Edmark, and H. Lundqvist (2012): Ethnic diversity and preferences for redistribution. *Journal of Political Economy* 120 (1): 41–76
 - Todos:
 - Pre-test mid-term exam
- 5. 09/23 **Reasons to vote I: Benefits and Costs**
 - * Gerber, A., M. Hoffman, J. Morgan, and C. Raymond (2020): One in a million: Field experiments on perceived closeness of the election and voter turnout. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (3): 287–325
 - * Cantoni, E. (2020): A precinct too far: Turnout and voting costs. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (1): 61–85
- 6. 09/30 **Mid-term exam**
- 7. 10/07 **Reasons to vote II: Context**
 - ** Chyn, E. and K. Haggag (2023): Moved to vote: The long-run effects of neighborhoods on political participation. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 105 (6): 1596–1605
 - ** Cantoni, E. and V. Pons (2022): Does context outweigh individual characteristics in driving voting behavior? evidence from relocations within the united states. *American Economic Review* 112 (4): 1226–72
 - Todos:
 - Intro to literature search and review
- 8. 10/14 **Electoral process I: Quotas and other rules**
 - * Besley, T., O. Folke, T. Persson, and J. Rickne (2017): Gender quotas and the crisis of the mediocre man: Theory and evidence from Sweden. *American Economic Review* 107 (8): 2204–2242
 - ** Chin, M. (2023): When do politicians appeal broadly? the economic consequences of electoral rules in brazil. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 15 (3): 183–209
 - † Casas-Arce, P. and A. Saiz (2015): Women and power: Unpopular, unwilling, or held back? *Journal of Political Economy* 123 (3): 641–669
 - † Brollo, F. and U. Troiano (2016): What happens when a woman wins an election? evidence from close races in brazil. *Journal of Development Economics* 122: 28–45
 - Todos:
 - Develop research question for final assignment
- 9. 10/21 **Electoral process II - Fraud and Accountability**
 - * Gonzalez, R. M. (2021): Cell phone access and election fraud: Evidence from a spatial regression discontinuity design in afghanistan. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 13 (2): 1–51

- * Artiles, M., L. Kleine-Rueschkamp, and G. León-Ciliotta (2021): Accountability, political capture and selection into politics: Evidence from Peruvian municipalities. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 103 (2): 397–411
10. 10/28 **Academic paper presentations**
11. 11/04 **Returns to politics I - Elites, nepotism, favoritism**
- * Asher, S. and P. Novosad (2017): Politics and local economic growth: Evidence from India. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 9 (1): 229–273
- ** Mahadevan, M. (2024): The price of power: Costs of political corruption in indian electricity. *The American Economic Review* 114 (10): 3314–3344
- † Gagliarducci, S. and M. Manacorda (2020): Politics in the family: Nepotism and the hiring decisions of Italian firms. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (2): 67–95
- † Dal Bó, E., P. Dal Bó, and J. Snyder (2009): Political dynasties. *Review of Economic Studies* 76 (1): 115–142
- Ajzenman, N. (2021): The power of example: Corruption spurs corruption. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 13 (2): 230–257
- Hodler, R. and P. A. Raschky (2014): Regional favoritism. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (2): 995–1033
- Todos:
- Develop an exposé with an *outline* for your final assignment
12. 11/11 **Social Networks I - Trust in government**
- * Guriev, S., N. Melnikov, and E. Zhuravskaya (2020): 3G Internet and Confidence in Government*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136 (4): 2533–2613
- * Miner, L. (2015): The unintended consequences of internet diffusion: Evidence from Malaysia. *Journal of Public Economics* 132: 66–78
- Todos:
- Refine your proposed empirical strategy
- **Submit your exposé**
13. 11/18 **Social Networks II - Protests**
- * Enikolopov, R., A. Makarin, and M. Petrova (2020): Social media and protest participation: Evidence from Russia. *Econometrica* 88 (4): 1479–1514
- * Bursztyn, L., D. Cantoni, D. Y. Yang, N. Yuchtman, and Y. J. Zhang (2021): Persistent political engagement: Social interactions and the dynamics of protest movements. *American Economic Review: Insights* 3 (2): 233–250
- 11/25 *Fall break*
14. 12/02 **The political economy of land-use change**
- ** Xu, A. Z. (2025): Bureaucratic packing in the brazilian amazon: How political competition drives deforestation. *The Journal of Politics* pp. 000–000
- ** Harding, R., M. Prem, N. A. Ruiz, and D. L. Vargas (2024): Buying a blind eye: Campaign donations, regulatory enforcement, and deforestation. *American Political Science Review* 118 (2): 635–653
- Dahis, R., I. de las Heras, and S. Saavedra (2024): Young politicians and long-term policy. *SSRN Electronic Journal*
- Araujo, R., F. Costa, and T. Garg (2024): Going viral: Public attention and environmental action in the amazon. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists* 11 (6): 1605–1627
- Bragança, A. and R. Dahis (2022): Cutting special interests by the roots: Evidence from the brazilian amazon. *Journal of Public Economics* 215: 104,753

† Alesina, A., C. Gennaioli, and S. Lovo (2019): Public goods and ethnic diversity: Evidence from deforestation in Indonesia. *Economica* 86 (341): 32–66

- Todos:
 - Class evaluation

15. 12/09 **Final assignment**

- Todos:
 - Submit by 11:59 pm
 - Social gathering

Topics left aside

I. Political preferences II - Ideology

- ** Enke, B., R. Rodríguez-Padilla, and F. Zimmermann (2022): Moral universalism and the structure of ideology. *The Review of Economic Studies* 90 (4): 1934–1962
- ** Fujiwara, T., K. Müller, and C. Schwarz (2023): The effect of social media on elections: Evidence from the united states. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 22 (3): 1495–1539

II. Determinants of election outcomes

- † Bagues, M. and B. Esteve-Volart (2016): Politicians’ luck of the draw: Evidence from the Spanish Christmas Lottery. *Journal of Political Economy* 124 (5): 1269–1294

III. Democratization and Democratic downsliding

- † Martinez-Bravo, M., G. Padró i Miquel, N. Qian, and Y. Yao (2022): The rise and fall of local elections in China. *American Economic Review* 112 (9): 2921–2958
- ** Martinez-Bravo, M., P. Mukherjee, and A. Stegmann (2017): The non-democratic roots of elite capture: Evidence from Soeharto mayors in Indonesia. *Econometrica* 85 (6): 1991–2010
- ** Barsbai, T., H. Rapoport, A. Steinmayr, and C. Trebesch (2017): The effect of labor migration on the diffusion of democracy: Evidence from a former soviet republic. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 9 (3): 36–69
- Martin, G. J. and A. Yurukoglu (2017): Bias in cable news: Persuasion and polarization. *American Economic Review* 107 (9): 2565–2599
- Autor, D., D. Dorn, G. Hanson, and K. Majlesi (2020): Importing political polarization? the electoral consequences of rising trade exposure. *American Economic Review* 110 (10): 3139–3183
- Bazzi, S., A. Ferrara, M. Fiszbein, T. Pearson, and P. A. Testa (2023): The other great migration: Southern whites and the new right. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 138 (3): 1577–1647
- Durante, R., P. Pinotti, and A. Tesei (2019): The political legacy of entertainment tv. *American Economic Review* 109 (7): 2497–2530

IV. Decentralization

- ** Narasimhan, V. and J. Weaver (2024): Polity size and local government performance: Evidence from india. *American Economic Review* 114 (11): 3385–3426

V. Electoral process III - Voting procedures

- Fujiwara, T. (2015): Voting technology, political responsiveness, and infant health: Evidence from brazil. *Econometrica* 83 (2): 423–464

VI. Political impacts of natural and climate shocks

- † Elliott, R. J. R., V. Nguyen-Tien, E. A. Strobl, and T. Tveit (2023): Natural disasters and voting behavior: Evidence from environmental legislation in the US senate. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists* 10 (3): 753–786

- † Gagliarducci, S., M. D. Paserman, and E. Patacchini (2019): Hurricanes, climate change policies and electoral accountability. Working Paper 25835, National Bureau of Economic Research
- Cotofan, M., K. Kuralbayeva, and K. Matakos (2024): Global warming cools voters down: How climate concerns affect policy preferences. CEP Discussion Papers dp1991, Centre for Economic Performance, LSE
- Hazlett, C. and M. Mildenerger (2020): Wildfire exposure increases pro-environment voting within democratic but not republican areas. *American Political Science Review* 114 (4): 1359–1365

VII. The political economy of pollution:

- † Lipscomb, M. and A. M. Mobarak (2017): Decentralization and pollution spillovers: Evidence from the re-drawing of county borders in Brazil*. *The Review of Economic Studies* 84 (1): 464–502
- † Raff, Z., A. Meyer, and J. M. Walter (2022): Political differences in air pollution abatement under the clean air act. *Journal of Public Economics* 212: 104,688
- Kahn, M. E., P. Li, and D. Zhao (2015): Water pollution progress at borders: The role of changes in China’s political promotion incentives. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 7 (4): 223–42
- He, G., S. Wang, and B. Zhang (2020): Watering Down Environmental Regulation in China*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135 (4): 2135–2185
- Innes, R. and A. Mitra (2015): Parties, politics, and regulation: Evidence from clean air act enforcement. *Economic Inquiry* 53 (1): 522–539

VIII. Political economy of Aid, FDI, and trade

- † Fuchs, A., L. C. Kaplan, K. Kis-Katos, S. Schmidt, F. Turbanisch, and F. Wang (2022): Tracking Chinese aid through China customs: Darlings and orphans after the COVID-19 outbreak. *SSRN Electronic Journal*
- Kis-Katos, K. and B. S. Sjahrir (2017): The impact of fiscal and political decentralization on local public investment in Indonesia. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 45 (2): 344 – 365
- Avdeenko, A., M. Kaiser, K. Kis-Katos, and L. Reher (2024): Sanctions, sales, and stigma: A tale on the performance of international brands in Russia. *SSRN Electronic Journal*
- Gehrke, E., R. Genthner, and K. Kis-Katos (2024): Regulating manufacturing FDI: Local labor market responses to a protectionist policy in indonesia. *SSRN Electronic Journal*

IX. Political economy of energy production

- Hausman, C. (2024): Power flows: Transmission lines, allocative efficiency, and corporate profits. Working Paper 32091, National Bureau of Economic Research

Course Policies

Class Materials The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students’ use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Class Attendance The University’s attendance policy requirement is that individual faculty set their course attendance requirements. Regular and punctual class attendance is expected regardless of modality. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. Regular class participation is expected regardless of course modality. Participation includes in-person attendance, and engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Class Participation Regular class participation is expected regardless of course modality. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Class Recordings The instructor may record meetings of this course. Any recordings will be available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those, not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Academic Dishonesty Policy Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. I strongly encourage you to review the University's policies regarding academic honesty: [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures, Academic Dishonesty](#).

The emergence of generative AI tools² (such as ChatGPT and DALL-E) has sparked large interest among many students and researchers. The use of these tools for brainstorming ideas, exploring possible responses to questions or problems, and creative engagement with the materials may be useful for you as you craft responses to class assignments. While there is no substitute for working directly with your instructor, the potential for generative AI tools to provide automatic feedback, assistive technology and language assistance is clearly developing. Course assignments may use Generative AI tools if indicated in the syllabus. AI-generated content can only be presented as *your own work* with the instructor's *written permission*. Include an acknowledgment of how generative AI has been used after your reference or Works Cited page. [TurnItIn](#) or other methods may be used to detect the use of AI. Under UTD rules about due process, referrals may be made to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct (OCSC). Inappropriate use of AI may result in penalties, including a 0 on an assignment.

Disabilities Policy Please find the disability policy here: <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>. It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the [AccessAbility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one-week advance notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact ARC for a confidential discussion. ARC is located in the Administration Building, AD 2.224. They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu.

Resources for student success UTD has a constellation of resources aimed at helping students. Please find them here: <https://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources> or see the UTD Student Resource Guide 2023 on eLearning. One example is the [Graduation Help Desk](#) which supports undergraduate students, faculty and staff to develop solutions to complex academic *and* non-academic issues (online appointments or write to graduationhelpdesk@utdallas.edu). Have a look at the [Comet Cupboard](#) which is a UT Dallas food pantry initiative dedicated to helping students in need. Also, take notice of the [Student Counselling Center](#) (972-883-2575).

²“Generative AI is a broad term that refers to a type of artificial intelligence (AI) application that is designed to use a variety of machine learning algorithms to create new content (text, images, video, music, artwork, synthetic data, etc.) based on user input that was not explicitly programmed into the AI application. Generative AI systems are “trained” by using complex algorithms to learn from an existing large corpus of datasets (often consisting of millions of examples) and to analyze patterns, rules and statistical structures from the sample data to be used in generating new content that is similar in style and characteristics to the original training datasets.” (ASU, 2023, <https://provost.asu.edu/generative-ai>)

Further UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.