
PSCI/PPPE 6335 – Fall 2026: Institutions and Development

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Credit Hours: 3.0

Office Hours:
by appointment

Class Time & Location:
F 4:00- 6:45 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Economic development varies drastically across countries—some experience sustained growth and prosperity, while others face persistent corruption, repression, and instability. What drives these differences? This course examines institutional foundations of economic development, focusing on how both formal and informal institutions shape growth, governance, and state capacity.

To tackle these questions, we will engage with key debates in political and economic development, covering topics such as the modernization hypothesis, distributional conflict, government corruption, and public goods provision. Readings will draw from a wide range of comparative and historical cases to highlight patterns and exceptions.

Beyond theory, this course emphasizes rigorous empirical research. Students will explore methodologies designed to identify causal relationships in political economy, including instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, natural experiments, field experiments, and difference-in-differences. Rather than focusing on technical details, we will critically evaluate how these approaches have been used to address major questions in comparative politics.

Throughout the semester, students will develop and refine their own research ideas. They will write multiple research proposals, present their work in class, and ultimately produce a final research paper.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the interaction between politics and economy at both domestic and international level
- Apply course concepts and analytical tools to explain the political and economic development process in several regions of the world
- Develop academic writing and analytical skills necessary for conducting research

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

Graduate classification

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

30%	Class Participation
15%	Research proposal IV
15%	Research proposal DID
40%	Final Research Paper (Presentation 12/4; Paper due by 12/12)

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

This class is a discussion seminar, not a lecture course. It is essential that students be prepared to discuss ALL of the readings each and every class. Many of the works that we will read are a blend of theory, methods, and substantive empirical analysis, which are aimed at uncovering systematic patterns

or solving puzzles. Class participants should thus be prepared to describe and compare the week's required readings from two points of view:

- (1) What are the principal **substantive** arguments being made? What phenomena are the targets of explanation? Are they clearly identified and defined? Are they defined at the level of individuals, groups, institutions, states, or other sorts of entities? What variables are proposed to explain them? At what level are these variables? What causal mechanisms are proposed as linkages?
- (2) What **methodological** approach is taken to enhance the credibility of those arguments and how well does it succeed? What kinds of empirical implications of the theory are examined? For example, over-time changes or corresponding cross-national levels of variables at a single point in time? Observation or experiment? Evidence of behavioral connections? How are the important variables measured--quantitative/qualitative approaches? What care is taken to specify relationships between multiple variables? How are cases selected?

Student responsibilities include leading discussion of one of the readings in each seminar, drawing the class into describing and comparing the readings substantively and methodologically. (There will be some flexibility about this depending on the size of the class and the readings for the week.) A one-two page handout of notes should be provided 24 hours before class.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

Students are required to submit and present total two research proposals. Each research proposal must be based on one of the last three topics covered in class. The goal of this assignment is to develop a research idea that can serve as the foundation for your final research paper. Your proposal should include the following sections:

- (1) Introduction: Convince your audience that your research is interesting, relevant, and novel. Provide motivating cases, define your research question clearly, and explain why it matters theoretically and/or empirically.
- (2) Literature Review: Summarize key existing work, including 5 foundational theories or empirical findings (3 top journal publications e.g., JOP, APSR, AJPS, IO, RIO, JCR, ISQ, AER, B&P, etc., and 2 most recent studies published within the last 2–3 years), and highlight literature gaps or debates that your research would address or contribute to.
- (3) Theory: Present your main hypotheses and their theoretical explanations. Discuss the underlying mechanisms and how your theory allows you to reject alternative hypotheses or competing explanations.
- (4) Empirical Design: introduce how you will test your hypotheses, including (a) operationalization (measurements), (b) identification strategy, and (c) data sources (+ pilot study if possible)

The minimum length of the proposal is 1500 words (excluding references, double-spaced, 12-point font, and moderate), and you will submit the proposal to eLearning course website by 24 hours before the class begins. You will give a presentation for 10 mins with slides followed by Q&A during the class hours.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER:

Students should develop one of their short proposals into a more fully formed paper including literature review, theory, and detailed discussion of research design and identification strategies. Suggested length, 3000-4000 words. Final research paper is due by December 12th, and students will give a brief 10-minute presentation of their paper on December 4th.

COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR POLICIES:

Attendance is expected at all classes. Students who are unable to attend due to illness or any other reason, should contact the professor prior to the class to receive an excused absence. The University's attendance policy requirement is that individual faculty set their course attendance requirements. Regular and punctual class attendance is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty.

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 Access Ability accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct (<https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdsp5003>).

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Regular class participation is expected. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures (and/or labs). Class participation is documented by faculty. 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. (<https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdsp5003>)

CLASS RECORDINGS:

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 Access Ability accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. 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.

COMET CREED:

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:
“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

ACADEMIC SUPPORT RESOURCES:

The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students. Please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>.

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 review the catalog sections regarding the credit/no credit or pass/fail grading option and withdrawal from class. 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.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**1. Introduction**

- Course syllabus
- Diamond, Jared M. 1999. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company
- North, Douglass. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-69.

2. Institutions

- Hall, Peter, and Rosemary Taylor. 1996. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms." *Political Studies*. 44(5): 936-957.
- Ordeshook, Peter. 2002. "Are 'Western' Constitutions Relevant to Anything Other than the Countries They Serve?" *Constitutional Political Economy* 13: 3-24.
- Glaeser EL, La Porta R, Lopez-de-Silanes F, Shleifer A. 2004. "Do Institutions Cause Growth?" *Journal of Economic Growth*. 9:271-303.
- Boix. 2011. "Democracy, Development and the international system." *APSR*. 809-828.

3. Institutions and Economy

- Glaeser EL, La Porta R, Lopez-de-Silanes F, Shleifer A. 2004. "Do Institutions Cause Growth?" *Journal of Economic Growth*. 9:271-303.
- Moore, Barrington. 1968. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* Ch. 1, 7, 9.
- Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., & Robinson, J. A. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review* 91(5): 1369-1401.
- Brollo F, Nannicini T, Perotti R, Tabellini G. 2013. "The Political Resource Curse." *American Economic Review*. 103(5): 1759-96.

4. Colonial Legacy

- Easterly, W 2001. *The Elusive Quest for Growth*. Chapters 1-3.
- Iyer, L., Banerjee, A. 2005. "History, Institutions, and Economic Performance: The Legacy of Colonial Land Tenure Systems in India." *American Economic Review* 95(3): 1190-1213.
- Dell, M. 2010. "The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita." *Econometrica* 78(6): 1863-1903.
- Nunn, N. and L. Wantchekon 2011. "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa." *American Economic Review* 7:3221-52.

5. Institutions and Natural Resources

- Engerman, S., Sokoloff K. 2000. "Institutions, Factor Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14(3): 217-232.
- Brooks S. M., Kurtz M. J. 2016. "Oil and Democracy: Endogenous Natural Resources and the Political "Resource Curse"." *International Organization*. 70 (2): 279-311.
- Easterly, W. 2007. "Inequality Does Cause Underdevelopment." *Journal of Development Economics* 84 (2): 755-776.
- Hong, J.Y. and Yang, W., 2020. "Oilfields, Mosques and Violence: Is There a Resource Curse in Xinjiang?". *British Journal of Political Science* 50(1): 45-78.

6. Research Proposal IV

Research proposal using Instrumental Variables approach by 24 hours before class.

Students will give 10-minute presentation on their proposal.

7. Corruption

- Frey, A. 2019. "Cash Transfers, Clientelism, and Political Enfranchisement: Evidence from Brazil." *Journal of Public Economics* 176: 1-17.
- Olken, B. 2007. "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." *Journal of Political Economy* 115: 200-249
- Fujiwara, T. 2015. "Voting Technology, Political Responsiveness, and Infant Health: Evidence From Brazil." *Econometrica* 83(2): 423-464
- Anderson, S., Francois P., Kotwal A. 2015. "Clientelism in Indian Villages." *American Economic Review* 105(6): 1780-1816

8. Culture

- Nunn N. 2012. "Culture and the Historical Process." *Economic History of Developing Regions* 27: 108-126.
- Tabellini, G. 2010. "Culture and Institutions: Economic Development in the Regions of Europe." *Journal of the European Economics Association* 8(4): 677-716.
- Habyarimana, J., Humphreys M., Posner D., Weinstein, J. 2007. "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101 (4): 709-725.
- Cantoni, Davide, Jeremiah Dittmar, Noam Yuchtman, 2018. "Religious Competition and Reallocation: The Political Economy of Secularization in the Protestant Reformation." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133(4): 2037-2096
- Franck, Raphael, and Ilia Rainer. 2012. "Does the leader's ethnicity matter? Ethnic favoritism, education, and health in sub-Saharan Africa." *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 294-325.

9. Political Violence

- Miguel, Edward, Shanker Satyanath, and Ernest Sergenti. 2004. "Economic shocks and civil conflict: An instrumental variables approach." *Journal of Political Economy* 112(4): 725-753.
- Lyall, Jason. "Does indiscriminate violence incite insurgent attacks? Evidence from Chechnya." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2009).
- Pierskalla, Jan H., and Florian M. Hollenbach. "Technology and collective action: The effect of cell phone coverage on political violence in Africa." *American Political Science Review* 107.2 (2013): 207-224.

- Bhavnani, R.R. and Lacina, B., 2015. "The effects of weather-induced migration on sons of the soil riots in India." *World Politics* 67(4): 760-794.
- Dube, O. and J. Vargas. 2013. "Commodity Price Shocks and Civil Conflict: Evidence from Columbia." *Review of Economic Studies* 80: 1384-1421.

10. Research Proposal DID

Research proposal using Difference-in-Differences approach by 24 hours before class.
Students will give 10-minute presentation on their proposal.

11. Economic Reforms

- Henisz, W.J. and Mansfield, E.D., 2019. "The Political Economy of Financial Reform: de Jure Liberalization vs. de Facto Implementation." *International Studies Quarterly* 63(3), pp.589-602.
- Grier, K.B. and Grier, R.M., 2021. "The Washington consensus works: Causal effects of reform, 1970-2015." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 49(1): 59-72.
- Malesky, E.J., Nguyen, C.V. and Tran, A., 2014. "The Impact of Recentralization on Public Services: A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of the Abolition of Elected Councils in Vietnam." *American Political Science Review*, 108(1): 144-168.
- Dang, T.A. and Stone, R.W., 2021. "Multinational banks and IMF conditionality." *International Studies Quarterly* 65(2): 375-386.

12. Foreign Aid

- Lang, V., 2021. "The economics of the democratic deficit: The effect of IMF programs on inequality." *Review of International Organizations* 16(3): 599-623.
- Dreher, A., Lang, V. and Reinsberg, B., 2024. "Aid effectiveness and donor motives." *World Development* 176: 1-20.
- Kern, A. and Reinsberg, B., 2022. "The political economy of Chinese debt and International Monetary Fund conditionality." *Global Studies Quarterly* 2(4): 1-14.
- Dreher, A., Fuchs, A., Hodler, R., Parks, B.C., Raschky, P.A. and Tierney, M.J., 2021. "Is Favoritism a Threat to Chinese Aid Effectiveness? A Subnational Analysis of Chinese Development Projects." *World Development* 139: 1-12.
- Carnegie, A. and Marinov, N., 2017. "Foreign aid, human rights, and democracy promotion: Evidence from a natural experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3): 671-683.

13. Final Paper Presentation

Slides for the presentation must be submitted by 24 hours before class.
Students will give 10-minute presentation on their final paper.

Final Paper Due by 12/11