Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:50 am (PDT)
Location: ECON 200
Canvas: https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/40848

Instructors: Sara Lowes and Samuel Bazzi
Email: slowes@ucsd.edu and sbazzi@ucsd.edu

Lowes Office Hours:
  Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 pm
  Signup: https://tinyurl.com/4ah774as
  ECON 318

Bazzi Office Hours:
  Tuesdays, 4-5pm beginning November 1 (by appointment before then)
  Signup: https://tinyurl.com/2s3tud5u
  Room 1410 of RBC

Course Description

This course covers topics in political economy. The course will be in two parts, the first half taught by Professor Lowes and the second half taught by Professor Bazzi.

We have two objectives in the course: (1) to get you familiar with topics and questions at the cutting edge of research in the rapidly growing and diverse field of political economy, and (2) to train you through repeated practice to evaluate the quality and significance of research—both others’ and your own. We will also devote one class to a writing workshop where we dissect a few high quality papers to understand the formula for writing an excellent introduction (and abstract) and well-structured paper.

Part 1: Historical Political Economy with Professor Lowes

The course uses a historical and comparative approach to understanding the evolution and development of societies. In particular, we will examine research that asks whether differences in economic development today have historical roots. In addition, we will study different mechanisms and channels through which history matters. Particular attention will be paid to the role of domestic institutions and culture in explaining historical persistence.
The material covered in this portion of the course intersects political economy, economic history, development economics, and cultural economics. Additionally, there is overlap with other disciplines, such as history, psychology, political science, anthropology, archaeology, and geography.

Part 2: Conflict, Diversity, and Nation Building with Professor Bazzi

This part of the course builds on the first half with greater attention to the causes of conflict and the nation building process. We will explore the political and economic consequences of diversity as well as the role of policy in managing diverse societies. Other topics include the role of migration in facilitating cultural change and the political economy of religion in modernizing societies.

Assignments and Grading

Required assignments for the course (and grading weights) are listed below.

The goal of these is to get you working like an academic economist, writing referee reports, presenting and discussing papers, and sharing research ideas. The following website has a wealth of great ‘how to’ material related to some of these tasks: https://sites.google.com/site/amandayagan/writingadvice

(1) Referee Reports (25%). You will be responsible for 2 referee reports on recent job market papers in political economy. You should begin with a one-paragraph summary of the main contribution of the paper. You should then critique the paper, starting with fundamental concerns and concluding with more minor comments. You should include constructive and realistic recommendations for improvement. Each report should be around 2 and no more than 3 single-spaced pages.

Choose one paper to referee by each date:

1. October 20:
   - McGuirk, Eoin and Nathan Nunn. 2022. ‘Transhumant Pastoralism, Climate Change, and Conflict in Africa’
   - Derononcourt, Ellora, Chi Hyun Kin, Moritz Kuhn, and Moritz Schularick. 2022. ‘Wealth of two nations: The U.S. racial wealth gap, 1860-1920’

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2. November 23:
• Assouad, Lydia, “Charismatic Leaders and Nation Building”
• Ghosh, Arkadev, “Religious Divisions and Production Technology: Experimental Evidence from India”
• Wang, Tianyi, “Waves of Empowerment: Black Radio and the Civil Rights Movement”

(2) Class Participation (25%). One presentation and one discussion of a required paper on the reading list, and the quality of classroom participation, will be a factor in assigning grades. Each presentation will last < 15 minutes. It should address: (i) the paper’s motivation (importance of the research question), (ii) data used, (iii) research design (identification strategy), and (iv) results. Present the paper as though it is your own. Each paper will also have a discussant that will provide a < 10 minute discussion of the paper that will focus on delivering a constructive critique of the study (identifying limitations and proposing extensions or improvements).

Papers to present have a † on the reading list below. Sign up for your presentation slot as a presenter and as a discussant here: https://tinyurl.com/yhjf4eh8

(3) Research Ideas (50%). You will submit two research proposals on October 28 and December 9, respectively. These proposals should be around 2 pages in length. They should motivate and clearly articulate the research question, describe the empirical strategy including data sources and identification, and offer a brief discussion of next steps. Early results, if available, could be included as well. More generally, we want you to treat these proposals as a chance to kickstart your second year paper with early input from both of us.

Part 1 Reading List (* indicates required readings)

1 Introduction and overview (September 22)
2 Why Not Africa? Indigenous Characteristics (September 27)


3 Why Not Africa? Slave Trades (September 29)


4 Why Not Africa? Colonial Contact (October 4)


Mechanisms

5 Culture: Concept and Definition (October 6)


6 Cultural Persistence and Change (October 11)


7 Individualism and WEIRD Psychology (October 13)


8 The Interplay of Culture and Institutions (October 18)


9 Conflict and Group-Selection (October 20)


10 Gender, Marriage, and Family (October 25)


Part 2 Reading List (* indicates required readings)

11 Economic Shocks and Conflict (October 27, November 1)


12 Diversity and Conflict (November 3 and 8)


13 Policy Solutions? (November 10)


14 Migration, Schools, and Nation Building (November 15, 17, 21)


→ when discussing this paper, we will go through the publication process from start to finish to give a sense of how the review process works


15 Religion and the State (November 29)


16 Writing Workshop (December 1)

Papers TBD.