Politics of Development
Political Science 127

UC San Diego | Summer 2021 | MW 17:00–19:50

Last updated: 24 June 2021. Please check Canvas for most recent version.

1 Course Description

Some 10% of the world’s population lives in extreme poverty—on less than $1.90 per day. More than half of these individuals live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and another 45% live in Latin America and Southeast Asia. A majority, or about 53%, of the world’s population lives under a non-democratic regime in which political rights and personal freedoms are severely curtailed, citizens lack access to basic public goods and social services, and certain populations are systematically excluded from the political process.

This course explores the lives of the world’s poorest and most marginalized populations. We look at the institutions that facilitate their inclusion or exclusion from markets and politics, and the policy choices that help or hinder their rise from poverty. We will draw on case studies from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Subcontinent to address the following set of questions:

1. What do we mean by “development,” and why have some countries been more successful in promoting development than others? How do political institutions influence economic development, and how do economic institutions and market structures influence political development?

2. How do sudden systemic shocks affect the political and economic lives of marginalized populations? How might micro-level shocks—such as the loss of a job or the influx of cash from a micro-loan program—affect an individual, a family, or a local community? How should we hedge against these types of shocks, or minimize their impact when they do occur?

3. How do individuals and institutions influence policy choices, and why do governments sometimes employ policies that hinder development? What types of macro and micro-level policies contribute to development, and how can we encourage the adoption of such policies throughout the developing world?

The course is divided into three units. The first unit begins with an introduction to the course and a review of basic theoretical and methodological concepts used in comparative politics and development economics. The second unit focuses on states and political institutions. We will look at the legacies of colonialism and the slave trade, and explore how these institutions may influence contemporary development outcomes. We then look at systemic shocks, such as political violence, climate change, and public health crises, and assess the impact of these shocks on development outcomes. The final unit takes a more micro-level approach. In this unit, we explore various topics of substantive interest to scholars and development practitioners, including, among others, property rights, credit, and political accountability. This unit will focus on recent literature that interrogates these topics experimentally, or evaluates different policy solutions using randomized control trials.
2 Instructor

Michael F. Seese, Course Instructor
PhD Candidate, Political Science & International Affairs
✉ mseese@ucsd.edu
☞ Office hours online, by appointment (please email in advance)
โย Office hours link: https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/9469714335

3 Summer 2021 Course Format

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this course will be conducted entirely online. In practice, this means that:

1. We will not meet in person during the summer term,
2. All class sessions will take place over Zoom,
3. Class sessions will be recorded and made available for asynchronous viewing via Canvas, and
4. Written assignments will be submitted digitally through Canvas.

Please check Canvas frequently for announcements, as we may need to clarify certain instructions and policies, or tweak the course format in response to students’ feedback and the incredibly fluid nature of the current public health setting. Naturally, you should all feel free to reach out with questions and concerns.

You can find the latest information and updates regarding the Coronavirus at the UC San Diego Return To Learn website. This website also contains information about vaccination, testing, and the CDC’s recommendations to help prevent the spread of viruses, such as SARS-CoV-2. If you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or are concerned that you may have been exposed to the virus, please reach out to Student Health Services. Additionally, I understand that many students may be worried about the virus and may experience heightened feelings of anxiety at this time. If you would like access to counseling services, there are resources available through UC San Diego's Counseling and Psychological Services.

4 Assignments & Grades

4.1 Readings

There are no required textbooks for this course. All of the assigned readings are available on Canvas. Because of the condensed summer session timeline (and the two holidays), the reading load for this course is quite intensive. Typically, students will need to read between four and eight papers per week. These are not textbook readings, but rather academic works that require close attention and thought. Some of these readings are in fact quite difficult, though students are not expected to understand every reading prior to class. We will spend time during our class sessions identifying and analyzing the authors’ main points. Additionally, please pay attention to the assigned pages and sections. Occasionally, only a portion of a paper will be assigned; we will try to skip over some of the more technical details of these pieces, and instead focus on the authors’ theories and conclusions.
4.2 Written Assignments

4.2.1 Weekly Discussion Questions

Each week, students will submit responses to a set of discussion questions pertaining to the week's themes. These questions will push you to think critically about course material and to articulate cogent, well-reasoned opinions. Responses should draw on the required readings, lectures, and class discussion, though you should feel free to bring in other material as well. Some guidelines:

- Discussion questions will be due every Friday at 23:59 Pacific to the link on Canvas,
- There are no minimum length requirements, but plan to write roughly one or two paragraphs per question,
- Discussion questions are posted on Canvas under the “Assignments” tab.

4.2.2 Policy Memo

In lieu of a final exam, students will submit a three to five page policy memo, similar to those written by (or for) NGOs, policy makers, and international aid organizations. Instructions for the memo are intentionally quite broad; students will have a great deal of leeway on what they write, and how they write it. In general, students will be asked to select a specific problem or policy issue, and discuss this issue in the context of at least one country (or locality) from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, or Southeast Asia and the Subcontinent.

We will discuss instructions for the memo in more detail during our class sessions. These types of memos have a fairly standard format (see this website), but they generally include the following components:

1. A description of the specific problem or issue (e.g., locusts in the Horn of Africa, depletion of fish stocks in Vietnam, HIV in Jakarta, etc.); this description should provide empirical evidence or relevant statistics to underscore the scope and importance of the issue,
2. An explanation of the political and economic factors that contribute to or explain the issue,
3. A set of proposed recommendations or conclusions,
4. A discussion of the counterarguments to your recommendations and your rebuttals to those counterarguments, and
5. A discussion of implementation issues for any recommendations (political, economic, environmental, technical, etc.) you propose.

To disincentivize procrastination during this extremely short five-week session, students will need to submit a series of weekly progress updates throughout the term. The schedule for these “check ins” is given in Table 1. Note that the final draft is due to the Turnitin link on Canvas by Sunday, 1 August at 17:59 Pacific time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Final Paper Check Ins</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliverable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic (~ 1 Paragraph)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough Draft</td>
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<td>Final Paper Due</td>
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4.3 Participation

Ideally, this course will be run as a seminar rather than a lower division-style lecture. We will place a great deal of emphasis on discussion and informal debate. This means that students should attend class having completed the readings and ready to talk through the day's material.

4.4 Grading

Your overall grade for this course is calculated as the weighted average of your discussion questions and final paper + check ins. The weights are given below. Note that each set of discussion questions is worth 15% of your overall grade (15% × 5 = 75%).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check Ins</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Memo</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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5 Course Policies

5.1 Class Sessions

Class sessions will be conducted through Zoom, and you can find a recurring Zoom meeting link on Canvas. Students are expected (but not technically required) to attend class twice per week. Please try to let me know in advance if you are unable to attend class regularly, or if you need to miss class on a specific day. If you are able to attend class regularly, I encourage you to do so. There is much added value to our time together.

5.2 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is expected of all students (and faculty) at UCSD. Lying, cheating, and dishonesty will not be tolerated, as these actions undermine learning and inhibit the University's ability to certify students' knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to enhance your grade (or anyone else's) by lying, cheating, or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result in sanctions. Sanctions may include a failing grade in the class and suspension or dismissal from the University. You can read more about academic integrity here.

5.3 Accessibility & Accommodations

Students with disabilities may request accommodations through the Office for Students with Disabilities. Students must submit their accommodation letters to the instructor and Political Science Department prior to any assignment or exam to receive accommodation. We are unable to accommodate students retroactively.

Students that require academic support should contact the UCSD Teaching + Learning Commons, which offers tutoring and group study, supplemental instruction, and writing support. Non-native English speakers and those with limited academic writing experience are encouraged to reach out to the UCSD Writing Hub, located in Geisel Library.¹

¹Some of these resources may be unavailable during Summer Session due to disruptions caused by the ongoing COVID-19 situation.
5.4 Inclusion & Basic Needs

The University is committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identity. Harassment of any form will not be tolerated. Any speech or act that is blatantly or implicitly discriminatory, intimidating, or predatory will be reported to the UCSD Office of Student Conduct and / or the UCSD Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination.

Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in this course, is encouraged to contact the UC San Diego Basic Needs Center or the Triton Food Pantry.

I am cognizant of the fact that the digital format for this course may impose undue burden on some students. If you have difficulty accessing the technology necessary to participate in, or to complete this course, please reach out. We will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your particular circumstance.

5.5 Late Assignments & Regrades

Late assignments (i.e., discussion questions, final paper check ins) will not be accepted. Final papers may be accepted late, with a \( \frac{1}{3} \) letter grade penalty for each day late. However, grades are due fairly quickly after the end of the term, so it may be necessary to impose a hard deadline for late papers. If you do plan to submit your final paper late, please contact me to work out the details; it may be necessary to issue an incomplete grade.

Regrade requests must be made to the instructor in writing in a timely manner. Written regrade requests should not exceed two paragraphs, and should outline any errors that you believe occurred in the grading process. Note that regrade requests are intended to correct grading errors, not to negotiate a higher grade. When submitting work for a regrade, the entire work will be evaluated, which may result in a lower grade.

5.6 Digital Course Presence

All course materials, including class session recordings and announcements, are available through Canvas. Additionally, all scheduled class meetings and office hours will utilize Zoom.

6 Schedule of Classes & Reading Assignments

This schedule is tentative, and subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

Unit 1 — Background

Monday, 28 June: Juneteenth Holiday Observed

No Class!

Wednesday, 30 June: Course Introduction

- Sen, Development as Freedom, Preface, Introduction, Ch. 1
- Banerjee & Duflo, The Economic Lives of the Poor
- The World Bank, Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune, Chapter 1 (“Monitoring Global Poverty”) and Chapter 3 (“Key Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Global Poor”)
• V-Dem Institute, *Autocratization Turns Viral: Democracy Report 2021*

• 📽 Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times

**Unit 2 — Institutions**

**Monday, 5 July: Independence Day Holiday**

*No Class!*

**Wednesday, 7 July: The State and its Competitors**

- Mkandawire, *Thinking about Developmental States in Africa*
- Olson, *Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development*
- Blattman, et al., *Gang Rule: Understanding and Countering Criminal Governance*
- Lust & Rakner, *The Other Side of Taxation: Extraction and Social Institutions in the Developing World*

**Monday, 12 July: Institutional Legacies**

- Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, *The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development*
- Nunn, *The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades*
- Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, *Historical Legacies and African Development*

**Wednesday, 14 July: Systemic Shocks**

- Collier, *On the Economic Consequences of Civil War*
- Miguel, *Poverty and Witch Killing*
- Egger, et al., *Falling Living Standards During the COVID-19 Crisis: Quantitative Evidence from Nine Developing Countries*

**Unit 3 — Topics in Development**

**Monday, 19 July: Property Rights & Land Tenure**

- Firmin-Sellers, *The Politics of Property Rights*
- Field, *Property Rights and Investment in Urban Slums*
- Anderson, *Intimate Partner Violence and Female Property Rights*
- Goldstein & Udry, *The Profits of Power: Land Rights and Agricultural Investment in Ghana*
Wednesday, 21 July: Health, Education, and Migration

- Elizabeth Pisani, *Sex, Drugs, and HIV – Let's get Rational*
- Baird, et al., *The Short-Term impacts of a Schooling Conditional Cash Transfer Program on the Sexual Behavior of Young Women*
- Ganimian, Muralidharan, and Walters, *Augmenting State Capacity for Child Development: Experimental Evidence from India*
- Bryan, Chodhury, and Mobarak, *Underinvestment in a Profitable Technology: The Case of Seasonal Migration in Bangladesh*

Monday, 26 July: Savings, Loans, and Insurance

- Blattman & Niehaus, *Show Them the Money: Why Giving Cash Helps Alleviate Poverty*
- Udry, *Credit Markets in Northern Nigeria: Credit as Insurance in a Rural Economy*

Wednesday, 28 July: Corruption & Accountability

- Grossman, Platas, and Rodden, *Crowdsourcing Accountability: ICT for Service Delivery*
- Humphreys, Sánchez de la Sierra, and Van der Windt, *Exporting Democratic Practices: Evidence from a Village Governance Intervention in Eastern Congo*

Sunday, 1 August: Policy Memo Due

*Please submit your memo to the Turnitin link on Canvas by 23:59 Pacific.*

7 Bibliography


