Politics, Policies, and Economic Prosperity in Latin America

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00PM-3:00PM, office SSB #365.

Course Description

In order to raise the rate of growth in Latin America, and to achieve fairer societies, policies matter, but so do the political institutions through which they are approved and implemented. In particular, effective policies are more likely to take place in countries where there is cooperation of legislators with sound policymaking capabilities, firmly institutionalized political parties that compete on the basis of policy proposals and policy results, independent judiciaries and strong, qualified bureaucracies. This course focuses on these political institutions and their effects on the policy making process and on the characteristics of the public policies that result from different policymaking environments.

Format

The class will meet three times per week for the duration of the quarter. Class sessions will be conducted as lectures. Each meeting will be devoted to a new theme/idea related to the link between politics and economic prosperity. Each of the topics presented in class is paired with one required reading. The lectures will review the concepts discussed in these readings, but should be taken neither as a duplication nor as a substitute for them. In other words, you should not assume that because you came to class, you can skip the readings, and/or that because you made the readings you may not attend the lectures. You will notice that I have limited the number of readings each week. I want us to focus on the key concepts of the arguments made, the logic used, and how the arguments are tested. You should read the materials keeping this aim in mind. Also, you may find it helpful to reread the material after it was discussed in class.
Assignments

Each week students are expected to read the materials. Students are expected to present a team project, take a midterm exam, and final exam. The midterm exam is worth 30% of the final grade; the team project accounts for 20% of the final grade; and the final exam accounts for 40% of the final grade. Discussion and general class participation account for the remaining 10%. Extensions, incompletes, etc. will be given in accordance with UCSD policy. Except under very pressing circumstances, they will be discouraged.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. Students in this course are expected to comply with UCSD’s Policy on Integrity of Scholarship. In particular, plagiarism is considered a dishonest practice and a serious academic offense. Hence, there will be a zero tolerance policy with respect to these practices: any student violating the obligation of academic integrity during the term will automatically fail the class. Copies of the current version of the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, also commonly referred to as the Academic Dishonesty Policy, may be found on the Academic Senate webpage: http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/AcademicIntegrity/AcademicIntegrity.htm

Disabilities. If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify the OSD, call (858) 534-4382 to schedule an appointment.

Course Materials

Readings are drawn from two books available for purchase, and from articles available off the Web through the UCSD Library System (marked in this syllabus by *). In addition there are some readings drawn from book chapters, and non-electronic journals. These articles (marked by **) can be downloaded from E-Reserves or will be made available by the instructor.

Required Books


Course Outline and Readings

October 1 - October 12: THE QUEST FOR PROSPERITY

Week 0 (September 28)

September 28: Introduction

Week 1 (October 1 - October 5)

October 1: The Quest for Prosperity
October 3: Mechanics of Growth I (Easterly, ch. 2)
October 5: Mechanics of Growth II (Easterly, ch. 3)

Week 2 (October 8 - October 12)

October 8: Incentives and Growth
October 10: Increasing Returns (Easterly, ch. 8)
October 12: Technological Change (Easterly, ch. 9)

January 29 - February 7: INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

Week 3 (October 15 - October 19)

October 15: Politics, Policies and the Economy
October 17: Bad Governments (Easterly, ch. 11)
October 18: Distributive Conflicts and Growth (Easterly, ch. 13)

Week 4 (October 22 - October 26)

October 22: The Washington Consensus
October 24: Institutions I


October 26: Institutions II


Week 5 (October 29- November 2)

October 29: The Policy Making Process (Stein, ch. 1)

October 31: Review Session

November 2: **Midterm Exam**

November 5 - November 30: EXPERIENCES IN POLICY MAKING

Week 6 (November 5 - November 9)

November 5: Actors and Arenas (Stein, ch. 2)

November 7: Parties


November 9: Legislatures


Week 7 (November 12 - November 16)

November 12: Veterans Day Holiday - no class

November 14: Argentina & Brazil (Stein, chs. 3-4)

November 16: Chile & Colombia (Stein, chs. 5-6)
Week 8 (November 19 - November 23)

November 19: Ecuador & Mexico (Stein, chs. 7-8)

November 21: Paraguay & Venezuela (Stein, chs. 9-10)

November 23: Thanksgiving Holiday - no class

Week 9 (November 26 - November 30)

March 5: An End to Boom and Bust?


March 7: Wealth and Prosperity


March 9: The Great Recession


December 3 - December 10: LESSONS LEARNED

Week 10 (December 3 - December 7)

March 12: Good Governance


March 14: Policy Making in the Real World


March 16: Final Overview

** Final Exam: Tuesday December 11 - 11:30AM - 2:29PM**