1 Learning Goals

The three main goals for this course are to: (a) familiarize you with the field of historical political economy including some seminal studies and, especially, the frontiers of research; (b) teach you to evaluate the quality and significance of research; and (c) help you make progress towards your own research.

2 Course Description

Historical political economy is a thriving field that employs quantitative historical datasets, econometrics, and qualitative case knowledge to study a wide range of political economy questions. In this course, students will gain exposure to the frontiers of research on the historical determinants of economic and political development, with a focus on five broad questions: Why are some countries richer than others? Why do some have higher levels of human capital than others? Where do cultural differences across countries stem from? What factors explain transitions to democracy? What factors lead to the formation of strong states? We will examine research that seeks to determine whether differences in economic and political development today have historical roots; and, more important, we will study different mechanisms and channels through which the past can affect the present. Particular attention will be paid to the role of institutions, conflict, geography, and culture in explaining historical persistence.

The material covered in this class is grounded in multiple disciplines including political science, economics, and history. There are at least four reasons why political scientists and economists are increasingly turning their attention to history to answer these and other political economy questions. First, some of the big patterns we see in the world today—e.g., which countries are richer or more democratic—have deep historical roots; they were at least partly determined by historical events and dynamics that have unfolded over long periods of time. Therefore, knowledge of history can go a long way toward building theories that explain these patterns. Second, historical research is attractive because it often enables access to detailed micro-data that might be difficult to obtain if we were studying the present period. Third, history is full of natural experiments that enable us to conduct well-identified studies of the effects of X on Y. Finally, knowledge of history can help us discard alternative (and logically plausible) hypotheses and mechanisms.
In addition to gaining exposure to the frontiers of historical political economy research, a main goal of the course is to involve students in research, from identifying and posing interesting research questions in historical political economy (broadly conceived), to applying historical research methods to a research project of their choice, to presenting their ideas.

3 Assignments and Grading

Class participation (30%). You are expected to read carefully the papers marked with (*) prior to class; and participate actively in the discussion of these papers. To prepare for class discussion, you must come to class with a response to the following three questions for each required reading:

1. What do you think is the main contribution of the paper? (e.g., novel theory/ original data/ credible identification strategy/ other)
2. What is a weakness of the paper?
3. A suggestion for improvement or ideas for further research.

Every week, I will randomly ask one of you to outline your responses to these questions. The hope is that this will serve as a starting point for an active discussion, contribute to create a seminar-like environment where you feel comfortable both talking in front of an audience and asking questions, and help you engage thoughtfully with the readings.

Referee report (20%). Write a referee report for one job market paper, in which you summarize it briefly, place the contribution within the relevant literature, and point out its strengths and weaknesses (1-2 pages single-spaced). A list of possible papers will be provided. A hard copy of the referee report is due at the beginning of lecture 6.

The final assignment (50%) is an opportunity to work on a publishable paper and to receive feedback on it. It consists of writing an empirical paper which may take the form of a short paper (around 4,000 words, akin to the “letters” published by the APSR) or a regular article (around 8,500 words, akin to the “articles” published by the JOP). In general, a short paper’s contribution is empirical, while regular articles make both empirical and theoretical contributions. In either case, you will need to pose and motivate a research question related to historical political economy (broadly defined), discuss the paper’s contribution to the existing literature, and use quantitative data (original or not) to address this question. Your grade for the final assignment will stem from two components:

- Presentation of final paper proposal (15% of final grade). During weeks 9 and 10, students will give a short presentation during class in which you will present a research proposal. Please come see me during office hours to discuss your project idea (ideally before week 5 and no later than week 7). The presentation to the class should pose and motivate a research question related to historical political economy (broadly defined), discuss the related literature, possible methodological approaches to address this question, and potential data sources. This is an opportunity to get early feedback from your classmates and me on your final paper. I will provide a template that you
can use to structure your presentation. Also, feel free to send me your slides 72 hours in advance if you want feedback beforehand.

- **Final paper (35% of final grade).** A final empirical paper of 4,000-8,500 words (ideally based on your proposal) is due March 26, 2019.

### 4 Requesting Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone); osd@ucsd.edu (email); http://disabilities.ucsd.edu (website)

### 5 Academic Honesty

You are expected to be the sole author of all your work, and to properly attribute ideas, quotations, and sources. If you are unsure how to do this, please come to office hours or ask in class. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please see UCSD's [academic honesty policy](#). All suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, or other violations of academic integrity standards will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. Any violation for which a student is found responsible is considered grounds for failing the course, not just the assignment.

### 6 Electronics Policy

Laptops, tablets, phones, digital recorders, and other electronic devices are not allowed in class, except for students with disabilities by prior agreement of the instructor. The research to date shows that (a) students tend to learn less when they use laptops during lectures; and (b) laptop use by one student harms the learning of students around them.

### 7 Readings and Schedule

Starred (*) articles are required reading before each class. The remaining readings are recommended if you are particularly interested in a given topic.

**Week 1 (October 2, 2018)**

*Why Historical Political Economy? What Do We Want to Explain?*


Our World in Data: [https://ourworldindata.org/](https://ourworldindata.org/)

**Week 2 (October 9, 2018)**

**Seminal Studies**


Week 3 (October 16, 2018)

Historical Origins of Aggregate Wealth and Inequality


Week 4 (October 23, 2018)

Historical Origins of Education and Human Capital


Week 5 (October 30, 2018)

Historical Origins of Political Development


**Week 6** (November 6, 2018)

**Historical Origins of Culture and Values**


**Week 7** (November 13, 2018)

**Historical Origins of Culture and Values (cont.)**


**Week 8** (November 20, 2018)

**Historical Origins of State Formation and State Capacity**


**Week 9** (November 27, 2018)

**Student Proposal Presentations**

**Week 10** (December 4, 2018)

**Student Proposal Presentations & Wrap-Up**