Course Description:
This course provides an overview of advanced contemporary research on the political economy of development. The goal is to get some background even while focusing on recent papers at the frontier. We will spend the first several weeks working through basic theoretical and methodological issues bearing on the study of economic growth. We will spend considerable time on the pros and cons associated with the move toward field experimental turn in development economics. In the second third of the class, we will move on to some fundamentals of economic growth—climate, geography, endowments, historical legacies, technological innovation and human capital—and try to understand how and if they bear on political economy. Finally, in the third portion of the class we will move on to issues that are more explicitly political, including political institutions, accountability, clientelism, etc. There are important bodies of work on identity/ethnicity, gender, foreign aid, etc. that we just don’t have time to cover. We will emphasize applied learning through the use of replications and extensions of recent research.

Course Requirement:
• Research Proposal (30 percent). The research proposals should be approximately 12 pages; it should reflect the organization of an NSF proposal and include a Project Summary, Project Description and References. See NSF’s “full project guidelines” for the precise content and formatting of these elements of the proposals; the guidelines are available online. Your proposal can involve observational data or an experimental design:
  o If it involves observational data, you should be clear about your theory, data availability/collection, and your identification strategy.
  o If it involves a lab or field experiment, the proposal should be clear about your theory, a justification for the location of the experiment, the principles governing sample size, stratification and randomization, and a strategy for data collection and analysis.
Be as clear and detailed as you can with regards to research design. I would encourage you to talk with me soon about topics, methods, etc. Be ambitious and precise--this is an opportunity to be creative, albeit in a manner tightly constrained by a data generating process.
  o We will have two rounds of meetings on your proposals. The first, midway through the semester, is on Wednesday, Nov 1; the final presentation is the last day of class, i.e. Wed, Dec. 6.
  o Conditional on the size of the class, these presentations should not exceed 10 minutes. In both cases, please circulate your slides 24 hours in advance so that we all have a chance to ponder the projects ahead of time.
• Two article reviews (20 percent; 10 percent each): You will write two, three-page (or so, single-spaced) reviews. Your review should eschew summary in favor of critically evaluating the paper. The basic goal is to make a recommendation to an editor (me in this case) as to whether or not the paper should be published. You should support your evaluation with a discussion of theory, method, data, etc. You can choose from any two of these recent job market and/or working papers:
  o Gaikwad, Nikhar. 2016. “East India Companies and Long-Term Economic Change in India.”

The first review is due by end-of-business on Friday, Oct 4. The second review is due by end-of-business on Friday, Nov 15.

If you’d like some advice on how to write a peer review, see:


- Group Discussion, Replication and Extension Exercise (2x20: 40 percent total): I will organize you into two or three-member research teams. Each team will be responsible for a discussion, replication and extension of the empirics from one of the required readings for the week. We will spend the last 30 minutes of each class on these exercises. Presentations should describe the paper, put it in the context of the broader literature, promote discussion and replicate results from the paper, check for robustness (by, for instance, analyzing subsamples or larger samples, estimating models using different assumptions, etc.), and engage in at least one extension; your extension should be motivated by a clear sense of purpose rather than ad hoc-ness. You will provide 15-minute presentations of these exercises towards the end of the class, and we will budget 15 minutes for group discussion.

  - All data, code and results will be shared with the class by 8 pm the evening before class. This will allow the rest of us to explore your data and code. You can simply email the class a Dropbox link.

  - I don’t care if you use R or Stata for this assignment. Whatever you use, please be sure to provide sufficient annotation of your code so that others can understand it. Each weekly exercise should be created under the “Projects” tab of the course repository.

- Participation (10 percent). You will be expected to have done all the required readings in advance of each class. Though I will begin each class with 45 (or so) minutes of lecture, class sessions will be conducted in a highly participatory seminar format.

  - To ensure we’re all keeping up, please post a half page or so of discussion points/questions bearing on the week’s reading to the “Forums” tab in Sakai by 8 pm the evening before class. You can raise questions about theory, method, point out conflicts between readings, develop links with previous weeks’ readings, whatever. These needn’t be long and detailed, but they should be thoughtful.

Course Policies:
Late proposals, papers, etc. will be penalized by a letter grade per day. Contrary to common practice in the department, I am profoundly averse to issuing “Incompletes”.

Course Schedule:

Week 1, Sept 6: Introduction
Recommended (these provide broad background and are not required):


**Week 2, Sept 13: Growth Models and Development**


Recommended (a fair number of these deal w/the technology angle into endogenous growth):

- Arias, Omar; Khamis, Melanie (2008): Comparative advantage, segmentation and informal earnings: a marginal treatment effects approach, IZA discussion papers, No. 3916,

Week 3, Sept 20: The Field Experimental Revolution in the Study of Development

Recommended:
• Alwyn Young ’Channelling Fisher: Randomization Tests and the Statistical Insignificance of Seemingly Significant Experimental Results.’ Working Paper, LSE.

• Humphreys, Macartan, Raul Sanchez de la Sierra, and Peter van der Windt. 2013 “Fishing, commitment, and communication: A proposal for comprehensive nonbinding research registration.” *Political Analysis*: 21 (1): 1-20


**Part II: Deep Origins**

**Week 4, Sept 27: Economic and Political Geography**

- Review Venables from Week 2.

**Recommended**

• Lipton. 1977. Why Poor People Stay Poor.

Recommended: Natural Resources, Endowments and Development
• Thad Dunning. 2010. “Endogenous Oil Rents.” Comparative Political Studies 43: 379-410

Week 5, Oct 4: Historical Legacies & Colonialism (Article Review #1 due this week)

Recommended:
• Gaikwad, Nikhar. 2016. “East India Companies and Long-Term Economic Change in India.”
• James Mahoney. 2010. Colonialism and Postcolonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective

Week 6, Oct 11: Political Order and Bureaucracy

Recommended:
• Boix book

Part III: Politics

Week 7, Oct 18: Political Institutions: The Macro Picture

Recommended:
• Hendrik Spruyt. War, trade, and state formation. in the Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics
• Besley and Persson. "State capacity, conflict and development", forthcoming in Econometrica

Week 8, Oct 25: Institutions II (Going Micro)—Property Rights and Land


Recommended:
• Blattman et al. 2014. “How to Promote Order and Property Rights under Weak Rule of Law? An Experiment in Changing Dispute Resolution Behavior thorough Community Education.” APSR.

**Week 9, Nov. 1: Presentation of draft research proposals**

**Week 10, Nov. 8: Institutions (Going Micro II)—Features of Democracy**

Recommended:
• Green, Jennifer, Abhijit Banerjee, Donald Green, and Rohini Pande. 2010. "Political Mobilization in Rural India: Three Randomized Field Experiments" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the MPSA Annual National Conference, Palmer House Hotel, Hilton, Chicago, IL


Monica Martinez-Bravo, Gerard Padró-i-Miquel, Nancy Qian and Yang Yao (2011) "Do Local Elections in Non-Democracies Increase Accountability? Evidence from Rural China" (with Monica Martinez-Bravo, Nancy Qian and Yang Yao). working paper # 16948


Olken and Barron. The Simple Economics of Extortion: Evidence from Trucking in Aceh.


Week 11, Nov 15: Accountability (Review #2 due this week)


Recommended:


Martinez-Bravo, Monica Gerard Padró i Miquel, Nancy Qian and Yang Yao. 2014.” Do Local Elections in Non-Democracies Increase Accountability? Evidence from Rural China”


Chong, Alberto, Ana de la O, Dean Karlan, and Leonard Wantchenkon. 2015 "Does corruption information inspire the fight or quash the hope? A field experiment in Mexico on voter turnout, choice, and party identification." *Journal of Politics* 77(1): 55-71


**Week 12, Nov 22: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 13, Nov 29: Clientelism, Distributive Politics and Redistribution (priority readings TBD)**


**Recommended:**

- Cruz, Cesì, Philip Keefer and Julien Labonne. 2016. “Incumbent Advantage, Voter Information and Vote Buying,” unpublished manuscript
• Morrison book chapter on Brazilian oil shocks and municipal spending.
• Martin Ravallion. 2009. “Do Poorer Countries Have Less Capacity for Redistribution?

**Week 14, Dec 6: Presentations for Research Designs; final projects due.**

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