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 deep fundamentals of development—geography, historical legacies, identity, etc.—and try to understand how 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 gender, foreign aid, macroeconomics, 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:
  - If it involves observational data, you should be clear about your theory, data availability/collection, and your identification strategy.
  - 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.
  - You will present your proposal on the last day of class, November 10. Conditional on the size of the class, these presentations should not exceed 10 minutes. Please post your slides 24 hours in advance to Dropbox so that we all have a chance to ponder the projects ahead of time.
  - Final papers are due on Friday, November 20.
- Two article reviews (30 percent; 15 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; note that these are the JMPs of recent PhDs who did well on the job market. Please review these two of these three papers:
The first review is due by end-of-business on **Friday, Sept. 18**. The second review is due by end-of-business on **Friday, Oct. 23**.

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


- **Group Discussion, Replication and Extension Exercise (30 percent total: 20 percent presentation/replication & 10 percent for audit/critique):** I will organize you into two-member research teams. Each team will be responsible for a discussion, replication and extension of the empirics from one of the readings for the week. We will spend 25 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, and engage in at least one extension (by, for instance, analyzing subsamples or larger samples, estimating models using different assumptions, etc.); your extension should be motivated by a clear sense of purpose rather than ad hoc-ness. You will provide 10-minute presentations of these exercises, and we will budget 15 minutes for group discussion, including 5 by the audit team. Please consult with me in advance about which paper you would like to work on. These presentations will begin **September 15**.

  - **All data, code and results will be shared with the class (via the course Dropbox folder) by 8 pm the evening before class.** This will allow the rest of us to explore your data and code.
  - I don’t care if you use R, Stata or Python 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 “Replications” folder of the Dropbox folder.
  - **By class time, please post your slides to the course Dropbox folder.** I will use the slides and code to grade your work.

  **Your team will also audit the code and critique the approach of another team once over the course of the semester.** You will go through the code, annotate it, write a one-page evaluation, and briefly present to the class how they did and what you would have done differently.

- **Participation (10 percent).** I 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. Some of you will not take the class synchronously so classroom participation will not be graded. But preparation for class will:

  - To ensure we’re all keeping up and help me structure lecture/discussion, **please post a half page or so of discussion points/questions bearing on the week’s reading to Dropbox by 9 am the morning of 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”.

**Classes in the time of COVID:**
It is a strange and difficult time to be doing demanding work. A couple of things:

- If you have unreliable wi-fi, a challenging work environment or other issues that make attending or watching course materials difficult, please let me know so we can make this class as good as it can be for you.
If you have mental health concerns and/or stressful events, there are a lot of resources available to you, including the ones listed below:

- **DukeReach.** Provides comprehensive outreach services to identify and support students in managing all aspects of wellbeing.
- **CAPS services** include individual, group, and couples counseling services, health coaching, psychiatric services, and discussions. (919) 660-1000
- **Blue Devils Care.** A convenient and cost-effective way for Duke students to receive 24/7 mental health support through TalkNow.

Keep an eye out for each other! I will ask that you explicitly check in with your replication partners regularly to see how they are doing. I’ve noted below biweekly check-ins—please check in even if (especially if!) you don’t know each other.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1, August 18: Introduction**

**Required:**
- Loiacono, Vargas and Tumusiime. “We Need More Respectful and Inclusive Experiments in Development Economics: A Proposal.”

**Recommended:**
- Chapter 1 in Acemoglu in *An Introduction to Modern Economic Growth.*

**Week 2, Aug 25: Growth Models and Development**


COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!

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.


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1 For evidence on the other end of selection (i.e. private schools into systems), see Abdulkadiroglu et al’s work on New Orleans.


**Week 3, Sept 1: The Field Experimental Revolution in the Study of Development**


**Recommended:**


- 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

• Dani Rodrik. 2008. The New Development Economics: We Shall Experiment, But How Shall We Learn?

Week 4, Sept 8: Experiments Continued: External Validity, Externalities, Implementation/Non-Compliance and Ethics
  o Spend some time on AidGrade’s meta-analysis site; note what kinds of studies are not there.
• The Worm Wars and externalities:
  o Macartan Humphreys. 2015. What Has Been Learned from the Deworming Replications: A Nonpartisan View.
  o Hess and Wibbels report on GSAM implementation.
• Ethics
  o Prottas critique.
  o Coville et al response.
• COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!

Recommended:

Part II: Deep Origins

Week 5, Sept 15: Economic and Political Geography
• Review Venables from Week 2.

**Recommended**

- Garfias, Francisco and Emily Sellars. 2018. “From Conquest to Centralization: Domestic Conflict and the Transition to Direct Rule.” Working paper, UCSD.
- Fenske and Kala. 2014. “Climate and the Slave Trade.” Working paper:
- Per-Anders Edin, Peter Fredriksson, Olof Åslund, “Ethnic Enclaves and the Economic Success


**Recommended: Natural Resources, Endowments and Development**


**Week 6, Sept 22: Pre-Colonial Institutions, Colonialism and Colonial Legacies (Article Review #1 due this week)**


- COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!
Recommended:

- James Mahoney. 2010. *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective*

**Week 7, Sept 29: Race, Ethnicity and Identity (priority readings TBD)**

**Recommended:**
- Guilherme Hirata & Rodrigo R. Soares. 2016. “*Competition and the racial wage gap: Evidence from Brazil,*” *Journal of Development Economics*
- Marcus Johnson, 2020, “Electoral Discrimination: The Relationship between Skin Color and Vote Buying in Latin America.” *World Politics*

Part III: Politics

Week 8, Oct 6: Political Order, the State and Bureaucracy
• COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!

Recommended:
• Guo Xu (UC Berkeley). 2018. “Social Proximity and Bureaucrat Performance: Evidence from India.” (joint with Marianne Bertrand and Robin Burgess)
• Boix book
• Rikhil Bhavnani (Wisconsin-Madison) - Does Affirmative Action Hurt Bureaucratic Output? Evidence from the Indian Administrative Service (joint with Alexander Lee)

Week 9, Oct 13: Political Institutions: Regime Type


Recommended:


These readings are focused on democracy. There is a large and growing body of work on autocracies that warrants your attention. Start with Eddy Malesky’s work!


• “The Consequences of Radical Reform - The French Revolution.” Daron Acemoglu Davide Cantoni, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson. July 2010


• Besley and Persson. "State capacity, conflict and development", forthcoming in *Econometrica*

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**Week 10, Oct 20: Institutions (Going Micro II)—Features of Democracy (Article Review #2 due this week)**


• COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!

**Recommended:**


• Mitra Akhtari, Moreira and Trucco. 2018. “Political Turnover, Bureaucratic Turnover, and the Quality of Public Services in Brazil.”
• 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, Oct 27: Accountability

• COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!

**Recommended:**

• Selection from Metaketa book.


• Fearon, James D. 1999. “Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance,” in *Democracy, accountability, and representation*.


• 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 Wantchekon. 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


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**Week 12, Nov 3: Clientelism, Distributive Politics and Redistribution—priority readings TBD**


See new Nichter book.


COVID check-in: chat with your replication partner this week!

Recommended:

- Cruz, Cesi, 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.

**Week 13, Nov 10: Presentations of Research Designs.**

Extra topics:

**Institutions II—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 through Community Education.” APSR.