Introduction to Comparative Political Economy

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Course Description

The objective of this class is to introduce students to the growing field of Comparative Political Economy. Specifically, the course focuses on the relationship between political institutions and economic performance. We analyse how political systems foster or hinder economic growth, and the ways in which corruption, clientelism, and political violence affect the welfare of the citizenry.

Although many of the readings use formal models or statistical methods to develop their arguments, no previous knowledge of game theory or quantitative methods is required. Feel free to skip the technical parts if they are too challenging and focus on the main ideas of the readings.

Course Information

It is very important that you read the assigned readings before class. Students are encouraged to engage in critical discussions and are most welcome to express their views openly and freely. I would suggest you to bring some notes to the class so that we can discuss together the topics you find most interesting.

All information about the course will be available at http://danilofreire.github.io. The syllabus will be updated periodically according to the progress of the class. Please remember to visit the website regularly.

Office Hours

I am very flexible when it comes to office hours, but it is easier to contact me via email. Feel free to send me a message any time at danilofreire@brown.edu. I will probably reply in a few hours. You can also meet me in the afternoon at my office. My address is 8 Fones Alley, first floor, office 114. If possible, please send me an email before coming to my office just to make sure two students will not book the same time slot.
Community Standards

I am committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office.

English Language Learners

The university welcomes students from around the country and the world, and the unique perspectives international and multilingual students bring enrich the campus community. To empower multilingual learners, an array of support is available including language and culture workshops and individual appointments. No student will be penalised for their command of the English language.

Academic Integrity

Students will write three review reports and a longer essay for this course. All writing should be your own work, and I take plagiarism very seriously. I am happy to provide any help you may require with your lessons as long as you are committed to the course. It is also important to cite other people’s work whenever necessary, and if in doubt, mention your sources.

Special Needs

If you have any special needs, please contact me. I’m happy to make necessary arrangements so you can follow this course.

Requirements and Grading

Participation: 15%. Students should be active participants in the course. Feel free to ask any question you may have, help others if you know how, and make suggestions or comments you believe are interesting. I hope we create a friendly, open environment for learning and students are the most important part of it.

Three Review Reports: 45%. The reviews should be 3-5 pages long. Imagine you are a reviewer for a good academic journal and think of how you could help the author improve the article. Are the arguments well-developed in the text? Is the research design plausible? What further examples could the author include to strengthen his/her arguments? Try to provide as much constructive criticism as possible. You don’t need to summarise the paper, just critically engage with it. The essays are due at the beginning of the class and late assignments will not be eligible for an A. Each report will account for 15% of your grade.

Final Project: 40%. In the final project, students will have the opportunity to write a longer essay about a topic that interests them. The essay should be related to the readings of the course, but you are particularly encouraged to explore new ideas and use new data to test their hypotheses. Students can work in groups of up to three people as most academic research is currently done
collaboratively. By the second week of the course, students should submit a one-page summary of their future essay. The instructor and two colleagues will review the paper proposal and give the authors constructive feedback. Students will then write a full draft during the term. In the last week of the course, students will present their findings to the class and receive feedback from their colleagues. The final paper is due one week after that.

Materials
There are many general references about political economy in an accessible level. I list here three recent books that are easy introductions, and could be read before the class starts:


Schedule

**Week 1: Introduction and Course Overview**
There are no readings assigned for this class. I will discuss the papers and the main topics that we will study during the class. This class will talk about five broad problems: i) the institutional and historical perspective on Comparative Political Economy (weeks 2 and 3); ii) state formation, state capacity, and state control (classes 4 to 6); iii) political regimes (classes 7 and 8); iv) political and societal environment and their impacts on political and economic outcomes (classes 9 to 12); v) political failures and their impacts on the political and economic outcomes (classes 13 to 15).

**Week 2: Institutional Approach to Comparative Political Economy**

*Readings*

*Recommended Readings*

### Week 3: History, Culture and Path Dependence in CPE

#### Readings

• Melissa Dell (2010) *The Persistent Effects of Peru’s Mining Mita*. Econometrica 78 (6).

#### Recommended Readings

• Karla Hoff, Mayuresh Kshetramade, and Ernst Fehr (2011) *Caste and Punishment: the Legacy of Caste Culture in Norm Enforcement*. Economic Journal 121 (556)
• Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2006) *De Facto Political Power and Institutional Persistence*. AER 96 (2)

### Week 4: State Formation

#### Readings

• Mancur Olson (1993) *Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development*. APSR 87 (3)

#### Recommended Readings


• Joana Naritomi, Rodrigo Soares, and Juliano Assucao (2012) Institutional Development and Colonial Heritage within Brazil JEH 72 (2)

Week 5: State Capacity

Readings


Recommended Readings

• Daron Acemoglu, Camilo GarciaJimeno, and James Robinson (2014) State Capacity and Economic Development: A Network Approach. AER 105 (8).

Week 6: Central Government, State Control, and Decentralisation

Readings


Recommended Readings

• Daron Acemoglu (n.d.) Chapter 14: Political Economy of States in Political Economy Lecture Notes.

Week 7: Autocratic Politics

Readings


Recommended Readings


Week 8: Democratic Politics

Readings

• Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2000) Why Did the West Extended the Franchise? Democracy, Inequality, and Growth in Historical Perspective. QJE 115 (4).

Recommended Readings


**Week 9: Inequality, Conflict, and Ethnic Politics**

*Readings*

• Erik Meyersson (2014) *Islamic Rule and The Empowerment of The Poor and Pious*. Econometrica 82 (1)

*Recommended Readings*

• Thomas Piketty (1995) *Social Mobility and Redistributive Politics*. QJE 110 (3).

**Week 10: Electoral Competition**

*Readings*


*Recommended Readings*

• James Fearon (1999) *Electoral Accountability and Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance in Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*.

**Week 11: Legislative Politics and Checks and Balances**

*Readings*


*Recommended Readings*


**Week 12: Accountability**

*Readings*


*Recommended Readings*


Week 13: Violence and Political Violence

Readings


Recommended Readings

• Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel (2010) Civil War. JEL 48 (1).

Week 14: Corruption

Readings


Recommended Readings

• Abhijit Banerjee, Donald Green, Jeffery McManus, and Rohini Pande (2012) Are Poor Voters Indifferent to Whether Elected Leaders are Criminal or Corrupt? A Vignette Experiment in Rural India. Unpublished.
Week 15: Distributive Politics and Clientelism

Readings


Recommended Readings