POL2400H:
Theories and Issues in the Politics of Development

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Overview: This course provides a selective overview of some of the theoretical and conceptual issues and debates that have dominated the study of the Global South. These issues and debates are not necessarily exclusive to the Global South; they may also be relevant to the study of politics in other contexts. The first section of the course discusses the evolution of the major theoretical approaches, largely generated in the west, that have attempted to explain the social, economic, and political experiences of the countries of the Global South. The course then moves on to a more focussed examination of some of the key concepts and debates involved in the analysis of domestic political processes.

POL2400 attempts to avoid duplication with other core courses and therefore assumes familiarity with some of the basic works in Political Science. However, at times duplication may be unavoidable due to the fact that students taking POL2400 come from different subfields. Bear in mind that development studies is as much an approach to existing scholarly literature as it is a body of scholarship. The field may overlap with comparative politics and with international political economy occasionally, but it departs from these subfields in its central concern for human welfare, particularly in the Global South.

Objectives of the Course

The course is designed to help prepare Ph.D. students for the field exam, for teaching, and for future research activities by encouraging critical thinking about political science and development studies.

Requirements

PhD students:
Two Presentation @ 15% each: 30%
Two Commentaries @ 5% each: 10%
Participation: 10%
Two, 15 page papers (double spaced) @ 25% each = 50%

MA students:
Presentation (must be on the required readings for one session): 20%
Essay Outline: 15%
Attendance: 10%
Paper (20 pages, double spaced): 55%

NOTE:

MA students

1. Your essay topic does not have to be on one of the topics listed at the end of the syllabus. Please consult me if you wish to choose your own topic.

2. The required readings are necessarily heavy for this course. MA students are expected to cover three of the required readings each week. If you plan to enter the PhD program please read the following section carefully.

For MA Students who subsequently enter the PhD program and wish to select Development Studies as a field

You must complete the PhD requirements for this course. This would require the following:

1. Two 15 page papers on one of the topics listed on the last page of the syllabus. If, as an MA student, you chose to write on one of these topics, then you would be required to submit only one additional paper, chosen from the topics listed. Otherwise, two papers are required.

2. Two, two page commentaries on two sessions other than the one for your presentation.

3. Completion of all required readings.

4. Please bear in mind that as a PhD student you are expected to successfully complete the field examination in development studies. Exam questions will be based on all required readings in this syllabus.

Essays (PhD students)

Choose essay topics from the list provided at the end of the syllabus. In selecting your essay topic, remember that demonstrating knowledge of the theoretical and general development issues raised in the course is essential. For your first paper, you are urged to write on a topic that covers the material in sessions 2-5. Your second essay should deal with one of the topics covered in sessions 6-12. Your essay topics may cover (at least in part) the same topic as your presentations/commentaries. However, bear in mind that spreading the assignments as broadly as possible is a much more effective way of learning course material in preparation for the field examination.

Due Dates:
Note: All essays, in Word, must be handed in through Quercus.

PhD Students:
First essay due: Oct. 12
Second essay due: Dec. 7

MA outlines are due Oct. 26 (at the latest); papers are due Dec. 7. A slightly later date can be arranged as long as you are not planning to graduate in the fall.

Requests for extensions on the due dates for assignments will not normally be entertained without a medicate certificate.

Presentations

The objective of presentations, commentaries, and papers is to give students the opportunity to read, reflect upon, and become knowledgeable about the course material. There are questions at the beginning of each session to guide students on the content of class presentations/commentaries. After considering the answers to these questions, you should develop an argument for your presentation.

Tips on Class Presentations

1. Class presentations must demonstrate knowledge of required readings and some familiarity with extended readings if appropriate.

2. Presentations MUST NOT consist of sequential summaries of articles. Rather, aim to develop an argument or main point drawing from all, or almost all, required readings.

3. Those presenting or giving commentaries on the same day should collaborate closely to avoid duplication. Consider taking opposing sides to stimulate class discussion.

4. Each individual student presentation should last a minimum of 15 minutes and not more than 20 minutes.

5. Do not read your presentation. Know your material well so that you can look at your audience (make eye contact) and talk about your subject matter.

6. Strive for clarity. If your audience looks puzzled, stop to explain your point more fully.

7. You may present one or two questions for discussion at the end of your presentation but the focus of each presentation must be to demonstrate your knowledge of the material and your ability to carry out a clear and coherent talk.
8. If you wish to use power point you must let me know at least one week ahead of time. If you do use power point, use it only for short bullet points.

**Commentaries**

In addition to class presentation, students must select topics for two critical commentary lasting from 7-10 minutes. Commentaries will occur after the presentation(s).

Remarks may include one or a combination of the following:
- comments and questions on the presentation(s),
- remarks on a particular aspect of the required readings not discussed by the presentation(s),
- an elaboration of a particular perspective/idea found in the extended readings.

Collaboration with the class presenter(s) and/or with the other commentator for the session (if there is one) is encouraged.

**Quercus**

This course uses Quercus. Therefore, you MUST have an official University of Toronto email address. It must be one that you use directly and not simply one that forwards emails to your main email address. If you do not have such an official University of Toronto email address, you will not be able to receive essential communications about the course and will not be able to submit your essay through blackboard.

**Readings for the Course:**

The *required* readings constitute the basic readings for each topic and the material you must know for the MFE. A selection of *Further Readings* is also included. These readings are included in order to inform you of other important works on topics. Students are encouraged to pursue these readings in accordance with intellectual background preparation and interests. I have also included a short list of texts on development studies, international development, and the politics of development for those who are entirely new to the field. There are many such texts available. These are only suggestions. If you have no background in the field, I strongly urge you to purchase one or more of these basic texts and to read these as background preparation for the course.

I have placed the required readings not available electronically from the library, on the Quercus web site. These readings are organized by session on the “Required Readings” page. If a session is not listed, it means that all of the required readings for that week are available electronically from the library.

**Basic Texts on Development Theory, Development Studies/International Development, and the Politics of Development**

Note: The library should have copies of most of these books. They are also available from
Development Theory


Development Studies/International Development/Politics of Development


TOPICS AND READINGS

1. Sept. 7 Introduction of course: Discussion of its Organization, Requirements
2. Sept. 14 Development Studies
What is “development studies”? What should development studies be? Should research on development involve the building of a “critical perspective”? Does it need to be “radicalized”? What is “relevant” research? Is the standard methodology popular in political science up to the task of explaining the social and political complexities of non-western societies? What contribution(s) do/should/can political scientists engaged in development issues make to development studies?


Selected Further Reading


Hall, Peter. 2003 “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics.” In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

PART 1: DEVELOPMENT THEORY

3. Sept. 21  The Modernization Perspective: Context and Impact

In what historical contexts did the modernization perspective arise and what are its basic assumptions about development? How did Huntington’s “revision” of modernization compare with the approach taken by authors such as Lerner? What contribution has the perspective made to our thinking about development and democracy? Is it still relevant? What are the perspective’s drawbacks?

Required


Seymour Martin Lipset and Jason M. Lakin. 2004. The Democratic Century. University of
Oklahoma Press, Chapter 5.

Selected Further Reading

Among some of the classics listed below, I would urge you to have a look at *Huntington’s book if you are not already familiar with it. I have also suggested some recent updates dealing with what has happened with modernization theory since its heyday.

Some of the Classics:


Recent Uses/Discussions of Modernization


4. Sept. 28  

Dependency, World Systems, and Theories of Imperialism

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the various dependency approaches, theories of imperialism, and Wallerstein’s world systems approach? How have these approaches evolved in recent years and are they still relevant? Is there anything we can extract from these older approaches that might be useful?

Required


Andrew M. Fischer. 2015. “The End of Peripheries? Or the Enduring Relevance of Structuralism for Understanding Contemporary Global Development.” *Development and Change* 46, 4: 700-732 (Note: This article is a bit of a difficult go if you do not have a background in economics and/or are new to development studies, but it raises some important points. Do your best with it).

**Selected Further Reading**

**Some of the Classics:**


Some Recent Updates:


5. Oct. 5 Development Alternatives (Sen) and Alternatives to Development: Alternative Development, Postcolonial, and Postcolonial Feminist Perspectives

Note: Due to space and time limitations we treating Sen and Postcolonial/Postcolonial Feminist perspectives in the same week. Sen, of course, is neither a Postcolonial or Postcolonial Feminist thinker.

What contributions have alternative (Sen), postcolonial and feminist postcolonial perspectives made to our understanding of the political and development challenges faced by the Global South? What are the major distinctions between Amartya Sen’s approach, on the one hand, and
that of the other authors in this section? What are the major drawbacks of the various perspectives included here?

**Required**


**Selected Further Reading**


_______. 1966. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. (Fanon’s work was an important precursor to postcolonial thought and he is a key figure in the development literature).


PART 11: DEBATES AND ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT


What are the underlying assumptions and policy recommendations of classical economic thinking/the neoliberal turn? How have these ideas played out in policy and practice in the Global South? How has the neoliberal turn interacted with domestic power realities and structures to aggravate exclusion and inequality? How has the neoliberalism been revised? To what extent does this ideational revision represent a substantially new direction in policy, politics, and in the distribution of political power?

Required


Selected Further Reading: Economic Globalization, Neoliberalism, SAPs

(In general, development studies takes a dim view of the impact of economic globalization, neoliberal reform, and structural adjustment programs. Most of the readings below reflect this perspective).


7. Oct. 19  
**Gender, Development Policy and Practice, and the Impact of Economic Globalization**

How has official development policy evolved on the question of the role of women in the development process? Has economic globalization improved or worsened the situation for women in the Global south? Has it improved or worsened patriarchy? What contribution have feminist economists made to the discussion of the impact of economic globalization? Do women in the Global South have a distinct and identifiable common set of interests that can be addressed by alternative social and economic paths? If so, where are such new pathways likely to come from?

**Required Reading**


**Selected Further Reading**


8. Oct. 26  Origins, Evolution, and Distinct Features of Postcolonial States

What generalizations can we make about the nature of Global South states, the reasons for the problems in the development of “state capacity”, and state/society relations in the Global South as compared with the North? What historical factors best explain the apparent weak states of the Global South? Why has clientelism and other forms of informal power arrangements, been such a predominant features of the states of the Global South? Why is it unlikely that Global South states will abandon their distinct features any time soon? What is distinct about the East Asian developmental state? Does it provide helpful guidance for development policy and practice for most countries of the Global South?

Required


Selected Further Reading

Informal Institutions and Politics, Patron Clientelism, and Cronyism

(Note: The literature on informal politics, particularly clientelism, is vast. The selection below should give you a sense of some of the older formulations in addition to more recent usages. James Scott’s article is a classic and one of the earliest formulations by a political scientist. The book edited by Piattoni is one of the very
few works that uses the concept of clientelism in connection with European political development. It is an interesting read.


Helmke, Gretchen and Steven Levitsky. 2004 “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda.” Perspectives on Politics 2, 4: 725-740


Collapsed/Failed/Failing States


Historical Accounts and Issues in State Building and State Persistence


The Developmental State


9. Nov. 2 The Debate on the Role of Institutions in Social Outcomes in the Global South

The authors examined in this section have very different views on what explains improvements in human welfare (poverty reduction, relative low levels of inequality). The notion of the centrality of formal institutional arrangements as the main drivers of economic growth and improvements in social wellbeing has been challenged by those who point to the role and impact of a variety of other factors. These factors include the following: the importance of underlying power arrangements, political settlements, political coalitions, and the quality of leaderships. Are these perspectives mutually exclusive or can the institutional approach be seen as complementary to these other factors? Is there anything that these analyses leave out?
**Required**


**Selected Further Reading**


Can states effectively leverage commodity booms in ways that reduce poverty and inequality? Does dependence on petroleum and minerals exports create special problems for development? What factors shape development/social outcomes in resource dependent societies? Does the case of Botswana convincingly demonstrate that institutions are the most important factor in marshalling the windfalls from commodity booms for social improvements? What have been the gains and drawbacks of the neo-extractivist imperative in Latin America?

Required Readings


Selected Further Reading

The Resource Curse


Resource Dependence, Poverty, Inequality and Development


**Resource Extraction, Social Movements, and Conflict**


Commodity Booms, Resource Dependence, Democracy, and Corruption (“Governance”)


In what ways are the social movement theories developed for northern societies useful in understanding the ability of social movements in the Global South to obtain greater democracy and improved social conditions in the era of inclusive neoliberalism? In what ways do these theories fall short? What contextual circumstances do they leave out? Has the concept of political participation, particularly as conceived by the World Bank through its notion of “social capital,” facilitated or constrained civil society mobilization and social improvements in the Global
South? Can the notion of “social capital” contribute to our understanding of social movements in the Global South? If not as widely understood, can the concept be salvaged and integrated into social movement theory?

**Required**


**Selected Further Reading**

**Social Movement Theory and Some Classic References**


**Social Capital**

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Civil Society, Social Movements, Neoliberalism, especially in the Global South


Compare the main theories purporting to explain political and criminal violence. Do these theories travel well to different continents and countries? Are these theories mutually exclusive or can one combine some/all of them? What accounts for the apparently blurred distinction between political and criminal violence?

**Required**


**Selected Further Readings**


Essay Topics

For doctoral students, essays must directly engage the required readings. You may develop your own topic(s) only consultation with the instructor.

1. “A full understanding of the development challenges faced by Global South requires that we employ an eclectic mix of development theories and perspectives.” Discuss.

2. “The problem with most development theory is that it fails to adequately address the issue of political power.” Discuss.

3. “Contrary to the claims of their proponents, alternative, postcolonial and postcolonial feminist perspectives simply confirm that it is impossible to construct a development theory that is non-Eurocentric.” Discuss.

4. The phenomenon of economic globalization immediately directs our attention to the constraints imposed by international factors and pressures. However, the old theories of dependency, imperialism, and world systems fail to adequately grasp the complexity of the current challenges faced by Global South countries.” Discuss.

5. “Economic globalization and the rise of inclusive neoliberalism have reinforced patriarchy, thereby worsening the conditions of inequality and deprivation faced by most women of the Global South.” Discuss.

6. Adequate accounting for the importance of history (path dependence) and political agency is one of the key challenges for theories of the development state.” Discuss.

7. “Development theory has moved towards a more complex understanding of the institutions that make development possible. Still, it is fair to label the institutional turn in development theory and policy as a “neo-modernization perspective.” Discuss.

8. “Only an unlikely set of conditions can result in resource dependence producing good social outcomes.” Discuss.

9. “For improvement in social welfare in most Global South countries, it is essential to substantially reduce, if not eliminate, the role of informal politics, particularly clientelism, cronyism, and patronage.” Discuss.

10. Much of the recent literature explaining good development and social outcomes has focused on the central role of institutions, especially formal ones. Write an essay assessing the
usefulness of this approach in understanding the root causes of poor social outcomes in the Global South.

11. “Social movements in the Global South are powerful forces for improvement in social welfare—just not in the way conceived by official development agencies, particularly the World Bank.” Discuss.

12. “When considering both the impact of economic globalization and the nature and role of the state in the Global South, the differences among regions and countries is so substantial that it is impossible to generalize.” Discuss.

13. “The causes of political and criminal violence are so complex and multifaceted that we cannot generalize across the Global South.” Discuss.

14. Write an essay weighing the comparative usefulness of two of the explanations of the rise/prevalence of violence in the Global South.