Comparative Political Economy  
Government 40.7

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 11:15 AM to 12:20 PM (X hour Tuesday, 12:00 to 12:50 PM), Thornton 105  
Winter term, 2015  
Instructor: Jason Sorens  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM and Fridays, 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM, 209 Silsby  
Email: Jason.P.Sorens@dartmouth.edu

Course Description

Why do governments intervene in the economy?

This course is an introduction to comparative political economy, the comparative politics of domestic economic policies. Topics include: market reforms in developed, developing, and postsocialist countries, varieties of welfare capitalism, (de)regulation and privatization, federalism, the effects of political institutions on economic development, interest groups, property rights, the political business cycle, and corruption. We will look in depth at both developed and developing countries, with an emphasis on understanding why they choose (or end up with) the policies and institutions that they have, even when in some cases these policies and institutions might hamper development or increase poverty.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand and apply sound social science logic to questions in political economy;
2. Evaluate political-economic hypotheses in light of evidence and logic;
3. Come up with plausible political explanations of economic policies.

It is recommended but not required that you have taken Politics of the World and at least one economics course prior to taking this class.

Course Requirements and Grading

Assignments

Class will combine lectures and discussion sessions, and attendance is required. You must do all the reading for a particular class meeting before that class. Contributions to class discussions and “mini research projects” comprises 25% of your course grade. There are short-answer quizzes on January 28 and March 4, each of which contributes 5% to your grade. There is a 1600-word essay on an assigned topic due February 11, which will count as 15% of your grade. About two-thirds of the way through the term (February 23 and 25) we will hold in-class team debates on different topics. Each student will turn in a 1000-word essay summarizing the points (s)he will make in the debate. Your preparation for your debate as revealed principally by your essay comprises 10% of your grade. There will be a final research proposal, which counts for 40% of your course grade, due March 17 by 4 PM at my
office. This paper must meet all the requirements of a standard academic paper, including citations of sources. You must get your proposal topic approved by me by March 2.

Devices

Please bring to every class an electronic device that you can connect to the Internet (laptop, tablet, or smartphone). Do not use these devices in class unless asked. We will be using them for in-class mini-research projects.

Absences, Late Work

Excused absences from in-class assignments must be discussed with the instructor. In the case of a scheduled, College-sponsored or College-recognized, extracurricular event, you must inform me at least a week in advance to make alternative arrangements. For family and medical emergencies, you must obtain documentation and contact me as soon as practicable after returning to campus. For take-home assignments, I do not offer extensions except in extraordinary cases of long-lasting family and medical emergencies, but you may obtain permission to submit an assignment electronically.

Work that is late without an excuse will be deducted half a letter grade up to a week, a letter grade at a week, and another letter grade at each week thereafter.

Readings

All readings are required. Readings not drawn from the books are available on the course’s Canvas site. I have chosen the following books for the course, all of which are available at the bookstore:


All of these books are available as used or even new paperbacks for between $6 and $13 each through fine online marketplaces such as amazon.com, bn.com, and bookfinder.com.

Remember to bring to class all the readings assigned for a particular day. That means that you will need to print out Canvas readings.
Schedule of Topics and Readings

1. Tools for Analysis
   Monday January 5: No reading.

2. Interest Groups in High-Income Democracies
   Wednesday January 7: Olson, chapters 1 & 2.
   Friday January 9: Olson, chapter 3 & pages 94-117 of chapter 4.

3. Interest Groups in Less Developed Countries

4. The Modernist State
   Wednesday January 21: Scott, chapters 1 & 2.
   Friday January 23: Scott, chapters 4, 6, & 8

5. Political Institutions, Transaction Costs, and Development
   Wednesday January 28: Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, & James A. Robinson (2002), “Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution,” Quarterly Journal of Economics 117 (4): 1231-94. Only pages 1231-52, 1257 (Fig. 4a), 1258 (Fig. 4b), 1269-79.

6. Political Institutions and Policies
*Short paper topic announced.*


7. Resource Curses


8. Electoral Politics and the Economy


9. Redistribution and Welfare

Wednesday February 18: Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1990), *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Polity), chapter 3
Swenson, chapter 1.

Friday February 20: Swenson, chapter 2.

*Student Debates Monday February 23 and Wednesday February 25*
10. Deregulation and Privatization


*Tuesday March 3 (X Hour):* Vogel, chapter 3.


*Class canceled Friday March 6*

11. Summing Up

Monday March 9: No reading.

*Final research proposal due Tuesday March 17 at 4 PM at 209 Silsby*