This advanced upper-level course provides the fundamentals of political economy or political socio-economics. Our central puzzle throughout the course is: “Why Are We So Rich and They So Poor?” Because the focus of this course is on the “fundamentals,” we take unit of analysis rather broadly, which means that “We” and “They” can be “civilizations,” regions, countries, political entities, economic systems, societies, “people,” classes, races, ethnicities, or individuals. As such, answering the question about socio-economic development inevitably involves comparison. In studying this issue, therefore, we will learn why we compare, what to compare, and how to compare.

Traditional political economy studied this topic, by assuming that environments and political institutions are given and neutral with regard to the market allocations; they are there but they do not act. New political economy differs from the traditional approach in its treatment of politics. It accepts that political institutions and their relations to the economy and society are populated by actors who have interests/ideologies/faiths and pursue them. Hence, this course is based on the belief that socio-economic development is fundamentally a political phenomenon. Another strong belief is that the politics of development should be understood in terms of the capitalist system historically embedded in particular conditions. A final warning: political scientists cannot study political economy without knowing some sort of economics, as we cannot study political history without dealing with history. So, we will study economic theories and formulations.

This course has three main purposes: 1) to provide a rigorous analytical framework and various theories and empirics of socio-economic development, 2) to equip students with solid understanding of the complex relationships between politics and socio-economic performances under the capitalist system, and 3) to compare different accumulation strategies and their consequences, e.g., Europe vs. the United States, East Asia vs. Latin America, China vs. India. To do so, this course is divided into four parts: I) The Nature of Development, II) Varieties of Capitalism, III) Dynamics of Capitalism, and IV) “Market Society” and Its Alternatives.
READINGS

Each student is expected to read (before class) all the required readings for each session (see the reading assignments below). Required books are:


REQUIREMENTS

1) In-class midterm and final examinations (25% each)
The emphasis is on important concepts and competing explanations of various sociopolitical economic phenomena. Knowledge of some relevant historical facts is required as well.

2) Attendance and participation (20%)
It is extremely important to come to class. Attendance will be taken for each session. Students may earn credit for their attendance at each class session, while repeated and unexcused absence will cause deduction in student’s total grade. In addition, students are highly encouraged to ask and answer questions, and to make appropriate comments on issues covered in class.

3) Six reaction papers (5% each, total 30%): You will write a reaction paper on Pontusson, Bardhan, Piketty, Sandel, Rifkin, and Žižek. You will write total six reaction papers in this course. A reaction paper is a short paper (no longer than two double-spaced pages), discussing some aspect of the reading. In the reaction paper you must briefly summarize the reading and evaluate some central aspect of its discussion. Note: “evaluate” means that you must identify some central aspect of the author’s analysis, explain why you think this aspect is interesting/important, and present your evaluation of the author’s position (note that you must try to make an argument, simply asserting your agreement or disagreement will not be sufficient). The reaction papers are due in class on the date scheduled for discussion of the readings (or, put it in my mailbox before 1:00 pm on the due date if you have to miss a class). You should submit a hard copy. Late papers will not be accepted.

IMPORTANT DATES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm examination</td>
<td>Thursday, March 5</td>
<td>1:30 – 2:50 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>Saturday, May 9</td>
<td>12:30 – 2:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Reaction paper on Pontusson</td>
<td>Tuesday February 10</td>
<td>In class or before</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Reaction paper on Bardhan</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 26</td>
<td>In class or before</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd Reaction paper on Piketty</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 17</td>
<td>In class or before</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th Reaction paper on Sandel</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 14</td>
<td>In class or before</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th Reaction paper on Rifkin</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 21</td>
<td>In class or before</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th Reaction paper on Žižek</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 28</td>
<td>In class or before</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mardi Gras Holiday</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 17</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>Thursday, April 2</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>Tue/Thu, April 7, 9</td>
<td>No class</td>
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READING ASSIGNMENTS AND SPECIFIC TOPICS

I. THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT

Week 1 (1/16) Introduction
Scope and roadmap of the course. Puzzles. Importance of the capitalist system. The state in capitalism vs. the capitalist state. The role of democracy.

Week 2 (1/20, 1/22) Meaning, Measures and Trends


Week 3 (1/27, 1/29) Imperialism, Colonialism, and Capitalism


Week 4 (2/03, 2/05) Classical and Neoclassical Theories


II. VARIETIES OF CAPITALISM

Week 5 (2/10, 2/12) Social Europe vs. Liberal America


Week 6 (2/17) Mardi Gras Holiday
No class.
Week 6-7 (2/19, 2/24, 2/26) Welfare States in Retrenchment under Neoliberalism


Week 7-8 (2/26, 3/03) Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India


Week 8 (3/05) Midterm Examination
1:30 – 2:50 pm.

Week 9 (3/10, 3/12) Comparing China and India Continued
The relevance of socialist legacy: “Are the Chinese better capitalists now (than the Indian) because they were better socialists then?” Social capabilities. Increasing inequality. Environmental disaster. How does political regime (democracy and dictatorship) matter? Decentralized governance structure. Accountability failure.


III. DYNAMICS OF CAPITALISM

Week 10 (3/17, 3/19) Empirics and Fundamental “Laws” of Capitalist Development


Week 11-12 (3/24, 3/26, 3/31) The Structure of Inequality and Capitalist Democracy


Week 12 (4/2) Conference
No class.
Week 13 (4/7, 4/9)  Spring Break
No class.

III. “MARKET SOCIETY” AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

Week 14 (4/14, 4/16)  Meaning of “Market Society”


Week 15 (4/21, 4/23)  Technological Innovation and the Future of Capitalism


Week 16 (4/28, 4/30)  What Is to Be Done? Implications and Conclusion
Crisis of 2009 as déjà vu. Significance of ideas and ideology. Critiquing critics of capitalism. Blueprints: desirability, feasibility, transformability, and sustainability. Blueprints and actual conditions. Conception of “development” revisited. If everything is endogenous, how can we identify causality, and what can we do? What is to be done? Class compromise revisited. Decent society.


Week 17 (5/9)  Final Examination
Saturday 12:30 – 2:30.