

The Politics of Development

POL 351 / SPI 311 / LAS 371

Spring 2025

Professor: Tanushree Goyal

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Contact Information

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Office Hours: Book on [Calendly](#).

Lecture hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00 - 9:50 am at A71 Louis A Simpson.

Precepts: Tuesday 1:30-2:20pm (Goyal, Robertson 006); Wednesday 9-9:50 (Abdelfatah, Robertson 008); Wednesday 9-9:50 (Abdelfatah, Corwin 023).

Course Description

Why do some countries attain wealth and robust democracies, while others remain mired in poverty and fragile democracies? This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the politics of development, exploring foundational concepts and contemporary debates. It examines the critical roles of institutions, state-building, and the relationship between industrialization and democracy. The course also investigates the effects of technological change, culture, and weak political accountability on development outcomes. We pay special attention to gender inequality as one of the most persistent development issue. Through a combination of theoretical discussions and key case studies—focusing on regions such as Africa, the United States, and India—students will engage deeply with the complexities of the key challenges facing humankind. By the end of the course, participants will have a solid grasp of both foundational ideas and cutting-edge research shaping the field of the politics of development.

Guest speakers

Spring 2025: The Spring 2025 course is indebted to the following guest speakers. Our first guest speaker is Dr. Sam van Noort, Lecturer, Princeton University. You can read more about his research [here](#). Our second guest speaker is joining us virtually, Dr. Ha-Joon Chang, Research Professor of Political Economy and Director of the Director for Sustainable Structural Transformation. You can read more about his research [here](#). Our third speaker is Dr. Ashwini Deshpande, Professor and Head, Department of Economics, and Founding Director, Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) at Ashoka University, India. You can read more about her research [here](#).

Prerequisites

Although not required, attending or having attended a course on causal inference will immensely improve your understanding of the quantitative materials. Note: You are permitted to use AI tools solely for mundane tasks like generating graphs or writing code. For any such usage, you must include an appendix in your submission detailing your approach, the specific AI platform used, and the prompt provided. AI must not be used for interpretation or substantive writing under any circumstances. The use of AI is easy to detect. If even a few of you rely on AI, the resulting repetition and recognizable patterns across submissions will stand out and can be easily identified. Any improper or unauthorized use of AI—whether intentional or accidental—will result in an automatic fail grade for the course and will trigger further disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

Email and office hours

In general, you should email me ONLY for substantive queries. You can also bring any questions, ideas, or concerns to office hours if you don't receive a response to your email in time or prefer to talk. For all logistical queries such as regarding attendance, canvas, accessing readings, class schedule, and a general first point of contact - please reach out to the teaching assistant.

Assessment

- Attendance (10%)- Attendance will be recorded by the teaching assistant during every lecture and precept, and it is mandatory. Any unexplained or repetitive absences will lead to fail grade in the course. Each student is allowed one excused absence per semester with prior approval of the teaching assistant. For absences due to illness, other commitments, or religious observances, please notify the teaching assistant via email in advance to arrange accommodations. Attendance is also graded: you earn points for each session attended, with full attendance throughout the semester earning a maximum of 10 points.
- Participation (20%) - Participation in lecture earns 5 points, such as through demonstrating attentiveness, and the knowledge of the material when asking and responding to substantive questions. Precept participation earns 15 points. Student(s) will be assigned one week where they will lead the precept and come prepared with a summary and discussion questions.

- Speaker questions and response memo (30%) - We have two guest speakers in our course. For each speaker, prepare a review memo in 1000 words constructively engaging with the speaker's paper. The review should have the following structure. A 200 words summary of the paper in your own words, 3 analytical big picture review points with exposition, and a 100 words concluding statement. At the end of the review pose two questions for the speaker. Due by Friday 5 pm the week ahead of the lecture.
- Mid-term quiz (20%) - This will be conducted in Week 7 in lecture 1.
- Final assessment (20%) - Choose a key research question discussed in the course and select a key developing country to analyze, outlining the motivation for the case selection. Conduct a comprehensive literature review, organizing it around a central explanatory argument. Your review should critically engage with existing scholarship while integrating insights into the chosen country's economic and political development trajectory, and gender inequality. Limit is 2000 words.

Weekly Plan

- Week 1 (27th Jan week) - Introduction to Development
 - We will discuss logistics and layout of the course.
 - What is Development? Read overview [here](#).
 - Sen, Amartya. Development As Freedom, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2001 [Ebook](#). Introduction chapter.
 - What is Economic Development? Watch lecture by Ha-Joon Chang, [here](#).
 - Browse: [UNDP Human Development Report](#), 1990.
 - Note there is no precept in first week.
- Week 2 (3rd Feb week)- Institutions and Development
 - We will briefly discuss major theories of economic growth, and engage more closely with institutions as the key explanation. We will discuss Africa's development in a historical perspective.
 - GDI Lecture Series: Are some countries destined for under-development? with Ha-Joon Chang, watch [in class](#).
 - Przeworski, A. (2004), [Institutions Matter?](#) Government and Opposition, 39: 527-540.
 - Easterly, William R. [Chapter 14 Conclusion: The view from Lahore](#), The Elusive Quest for Growth : Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics, MIT Press, 2001.
 - Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2001. [“The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation.”](#) American Economic Review, 91 (5): 1369–1401.
 - Nathan Nunn, [The Long-term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades](#), The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 123, Issue 1, February 2008, Pages 139–176.

- Collier, Paul, and Jan Willem Gunning. 1999. “Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13 (3): 3–22.
- Week 3 (10th Feb week)– State-Directed Development
 - Kohli, A. (2004). *Introduction chapter*, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - Chang, H. J. (2003). *Kicking Away the Ladder: Infant Industry Promotion in Historical Perspective*. *Oxford Development Studies*, 31(1), 21–32.
 - Is Industrial Policy Making a Comeback? [read blog here](#).
 - The new economics of industrial policy by Réka Juhász, Nathaniel Lane, and Dani Rodrik, read [here](#). (Optional reading - [here](#).)
- Week 4 (17th Feb week)– Industrialization and Democracy

This week is a series of two guest lectures by Sam van Noort. Reviewing the relationship between economic development and democracy, he will turn into an in-depth discussion of his paper.

 - Van Noort, Sam. “Industrialization and Democracy,” *World Politics*, vol. 76 no. 3, 2024, p. 457-498.
 - Lipset SM. *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy*. *American Political Science Review*. 1959;53(1):69-105.
 - Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared. 2008. “Income and Democracy.” *American Economic Review*, 98 (3): 808–42.
 - Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared. 2005. *From Education to Democracy?* *American Economic Review*, 95 (2): 44–49.
 - Przeworski, A., & Limongi, F. (1997). “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” *World Politics*, 49(2), 155-183.
 - Note there is no precept this week, but additional office hours.
- Week 5 (24th Feb week)– Democracy at crossroads

We will discuss the world’s largest and most improbable democracy: India, and situate it alongside other hard cases of democracy. We will then discuss the future of democracy by focusing on Boix’s book.

 - Masoud, Tarek, and Scott Mainwaring, “Introduction: Democracy in Hard Places”, in Scott Mainwaring, and Tarek Masoud (eds), *Democracy in Hard Places* (New York, 2022; online edn, Oxford Academic).
 - Varshney, Ashutosh. “India Defies the Odds: Why Democracy Survives, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 9 no. 3, 1998, p. 36-50; and “How India’s Ruling Party Erodes Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 33 no. 4, 2022, p. 104-118.
 - Shani, O. (2017). *Designing for Democracy: Rewriting the Bureaucratic Colonial Imagination*. In *How India Became Democratic: Citizenship and the Making of the Universal Franchise* (pp. 21–51). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- The second lecture is a movie morning - We will watch Newton in class. Unfortunately, the movie is not available on any streaming platform, so the only way we can watch it is in class.
- Week 6 (3rd Mar week) - Technology as “creative destruction”
 - The first lecture is a movie morning - We will finish watching Newton in class.
 - Boix, Carles. **“Introduction”** In Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads: Technological Change and the Future of Politics, Princeton University Press, 2019.
 - **Daron Acemoglu’s Written Testimony**, House Committee on the Budget, Hearing on Machines, Artificial Intelligence, & the Workforce: Recovering & Ready-ing Our Economy for the Future. Optional: Acemoglu, Daron, **Harms of AI**, in Justin B. Bullock, and others (eds), The Oxford Handbook of AI Governance, 2024.
 - How the Washing Machine Changed the World: The Far-Reaching Impact of Household Appliances, read blog [here](#). The economist and author says the washing machine changed the world more than the internet, a tool we overestimate while ignoring its downsides, read [here](#).
- Week 7 (17th Mar week)– Culture and Development
We will focus more specifically on how culture plays a role in shaping development and policy outcomes.
 - The mid-term quiz will be conducted in the first lecture.
 - Nathan Nunn talk about role of culture in three domains: health, agriculture, and education: [here](#).
 - Alberto Alesina, Paola Giuliano, Nathan Nunn, **On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough**, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 128, Issue 2, May 2013, Pages 469–530.
 - Robinson AL, Gottlieb J. **How to Close the Gender Gap in Political Participation: Lessons from Matrilineal Societies in Africa**. British Journal of Political Science. 2021;51(1):68-92.
- Week 8 (24th Mar week)– Guest Speaker & State-building
- Guest Speaker (virtual), Tuesday 25th March - Dr. Ha Joon Chang. For this discussion, the most relevant chapter will be “Okra” where different notions of freedom in economics—and beyond—are explored. Since the chapters in Edible Economics are brief (typically 8-10 pages), students are also encouraged to read one of the following related chapters:
 - “Rye” – Discusses the welfare state and its connection to Okra through the Louisiana Purchase.
 - “Beef” – Examines the theme of freedom from an economic perspective, particularly critiquing the myth of free trade.

- “Chicken” – Explores inequality and fairness, which are natural conceptual counterparts to economic freedom.
- Assignment (participation 3 points/ optional) - Please submit questions (up to 3 max) for the speaker based on previous readings and assigned material to be considered. Only selected questions will receive the grade points and opportunity to pose the question to the speaker. Questions can also be posed to clarify Dr. Chang’s position on the topics discussed in the class.

Weak states are at the heart of development problems. We will gain an overview of foundational theories explaining causes and consequences of state-building and state capacity.

- State capacity, [here](#).
 - Rothstein, B. and Teorell, J. (2008), [What Is Quality of Government? A Theory of Impartial Government Institutions](#). Governance, 21: 165-190.
 - Fukuyama, Francis. [“The Imperative of State-Building,”](#) Journal of Democracy, vol. 15 no. 2, 2004, p. 17-31.
 - Suryanarayan, Pavirtha. 2024. [Endogenous state capacity](#), Annual Review of Political Science. Vol. 27:223-243.
 - Tilly, C. (1985). [War Making and State Making as Organized Crime](#). In P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol (Eds.), Bringing the State Back In (pp. 169–191). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (optional)
 - Grzymała-Busse, Anna. [Introduction](#), In Sacred Foundations: The Religious and Medieval Roots of the European State, 1–20. Princeton University Press, 2023. (optional)
- Week 9 (31st Mar week) - Political accountability
Do elections produce responsive governments? Do voters vote for programmatic politics in developing countries? We explore lack of information and clientelism as barriers to electoral accountability and government responsiveness. We turn to roads provision as a case study for evaluating the health of electoral accountability in Ghana and India.
 - Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels (2016), [“Democracy for realists: why elections do not produce responsive government”](#) Chapter 1. Optional reading : Chapter 2.
 - Dunning, Thad, et al. [“Voter information campaigns and political accountability: Cumulative findings from a preregistered meta-analysis of coordinated trials.”](#) Science Advances 5.7 (2019): eaaw2612.
 - Wantchekon L. [Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin](#). World Politics. 2003;55(3):399-422.
 - Goyal, Tanushree. 2024, [“Do Citizens Enforce Accountability for Public Goods Provision? Evidence from India’s Rural Roads Program,”](#)The Journal of Politics 86:1, 97-112.
 - Optional: Harding R. [Attribution And Accountability: Voting for roads in Ghana](#). World Politics. 2015;67(4):656-689.

- Week 10 (7th Apr week) - Economic Development and Gender Inequality
 Gender inequality remains the most deeply rooted and enduring injustice in societies. Addressing it however can unlock the potential for greater economic, political, and social freedoms. In this week we focus on the relationship between economic development and gender. We then turn to political gender gaps and how gender quotas can close them.
 - Sen, Amartya. Development As Freedom, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2001 [Ebook](#). Chapter 8, “Women’s agency and Social Change.”
 - Duflo, Esther. [“Women Empowerment and Economic Development”](#) Journal of Economic Literature 50, no. 4 (December 2012): 1051-1079.
 - Browse: [Global Gender Gap Report 2024](#), The World Economic Forum
 - Goyal T. 2024. [Representation from Below: How Women’s Grassroots Party Activism Promotes Equal Political Participation](#). American Political Science Review 118(3), 1415–1430.
 - Hughes, M, et al. [“Global Gender Quota Adoption, Implementation, and Reform”](#) Comparative Politics, vol. 51, no. 2, 2019, pp. 219–38
- Week 11 (14th Apr week) - Economic Development and Gender Inequality
 This week we have a guest lecture by Dr. Ashwini Deshpande who will focus on women’s labor force participation in India (the first two readings are assigned for this lecture). In the next lecture, we turn to women’s careers in the West.
 - Reading from Dr. Ashwini Deshpande (TBA).
 - Read: Jayachandran, S. [“Social Norms as a Barrier to Women’s Employment in Developing Countries.”](#) IMF Econ Rev 69, 576–595 (2021).
 - Watch: 2020, 12th Annual Feldstein Lecture, Claudia Goldin, [“Journey Across a Century of Women”](#)
 - Lundborg, Petter, Erik Plug, and Astrid Würtz Rasmussen. 2017. [“Can Women Have Children and a Career? IV Evidence from IVF Treatments”](#) American Economic Review, 107 (6): 1611-37.
- Week 12 (21st Apr week) - Wrap-up and reflections
 - We will recap the course and have an open forum for discussion.
 - Students are suggested to prepare mini reflection pieces (5 mins) and there will be a group discussion in the lecture.
 - Note there is no precept this week, but additional office hours.