

CPO 4034 Politics in Developing Nations

Department of Political Science

University of Florida

Spring 2026

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 12:50-1:50 pm, or by appointment

Make an appointment: Canvas Message

Course Information

Date: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Location: Anderson 34

Time: Period 7, 1:55-2:45 pm

Course Description

This course introduces politics in third world states, an examination of common problems and the various strategies for dealing with them. Why are some countries wealthier, more stable, and better governed than others? Why do some societies reduce poverty and inequality while others remain trapped in cycles of stagnation, crisis, or violence? This course examines these questions through the comparative politics of development. Rather than treating development as an economic puzzle alone, this course approaches it as a political one – different development strategies are chosen, implemented, contested, and sometimes derailed through institutions, coalitions, regime type, and struggles over distribution. Why is it so? Why do similar countries facing comparable constraints adopt different models and achieve different outcomes?

The course begins by clarifying what “development” means and how it is measured. We then trace major paradigms that have shaped debates about development in the global South, from modernization theory and its claims about prosperity and political order, to dependency and world-systems perspectives that emphasize structural inequality in the international economy. Building on these foundations, we examine the politics of industrialization and state-led development, the shift from import-substitution to export-oriented growth, and the rise of structural adjustment and neoliberal reform.

Across the semester, we will compare democratic and authoritarian pathways to development, the political logic of clientelism and social policy, and the ways foreign aid, violence, and natural resources can reshape incentives, actors, and institutions. We will also have “case labs” each week where we will draw on contemporary cases around the world and connect theories to real-world decisions and dilemmas. By the end of the semester, students will be able to evaluate competing explanations of (under)development and apply them to concrete country trajectories with analytical rigor.

Course Goals & Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

1. Content: Demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies, and theories used in the study of politics of development in developing countries.

2. Critical thinking: Carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop nuanced understandings of solutions to problems in different developing nations across regions.
3. Communication: Clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written and oral forms appropriate to knowledge of developing nations and theories of development.

Assignments and Grading

Assignments	Description	Weight	Due Date
Attendance & Participation	This will be assessed across the semester based on attendance, preparation (having done the readings), and active contribution to discussion.	10%	N/A
Quiz #1	In-class quiz covering Weeks 1-6 themes and readings. Mix of fill-in-the-blanks, short definitions, and short analytical prompts.	15%	February 23 rd
Quiz #2	In-class quiz covering Weeks 7-14 themes and readings. Same format as Quiz #1.	15%	April 15 th
News X Theories of Development	A short written assignment connecting a current news story to a course framework. Students must (1) choose a week/theme and clearly state the theoretical lens, (2) summarize the event/problem and identify relevant actors/incentives, (3) apply the theory to explain outcomes/mechanisms, and (4) evaluate limits/alternative explanations (e.g., what the theory misses and why). Format: 1,000 words, Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced. Must include a link to the news piece and cite at least one course reading (beyond A&R if relevant).	10%	Due on the Wednesday of the week/theme you choose (varies), 11.59pm
Final Paper Topic Proposal	1-2 pages stating: (1) research question/puzzle and why it matters, (2) tentative argument/hypothesis, (3) case(s) and justification, and (4) a preliminary plan for evidence (what you will look at and how).	10%	January 30 th , 11.59pm
Building Blocks for Final Paper #1: Annotated Bibliography**	8 scholarly sources (peer-reviewed articles and/or academic books; <u>excluding class materials</u>). Each entry includes a full citation plus a 3-4 sentence annotation covering: main argument, evidence/method, and how the source will be used in your paper (support/contrast/define concepts).		February 27 th , 11.59pm
Building Blocks for Final Paper #2: Literature Review**	2-3 pages synthesizing the main scholarly debates relevant to your topic (not a list of summaries). It must identify (1) key arguments in the literature, (2) points of disagreement, and (3) where your paper fits (your contribution or what you will test/compare).	10%	March 27 th , 11.59pm
Building Blocks for Final Paper #3: Research Design**	1-2 pages specifying: cases and rationale (why these cases), key concepts/definitions, operationalization or plan for analyzing evidence, and what empirical material you will use (e.g., laws, budgets, election returns, speeches, datasets, interviews/archives if applicable).		April 3 rd , 11.59pm

Assignments	Description	Weight	Due Date
Final Paper Presentation	A 10-12 minute presentation of project, followed by Q&A.	10%	Varies
Final Paper	Independent research paper tied to a course theme. It must include a clear argument, engagement with scholarship, and cite at least three course readings. Format: 1,800-2,500 words, Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced, with proper citations and bibliography.	20%	April 28 th , 11.59pm

** Over the course of the semester, the three “Building Blocks for Final Paper” assignments will provide opportunities to develop and get my feedback on the final research paper. Each of these assignments will be graded on “effort,” with the following three categories for assessing this effort: “solid and satisfactory effort” (100% for that particular assignment), “insufficient effort” (70% for the assignment), and “not completed” (0% for the assignment).

Grading Scale			
A	94 or above	C-	70-73.99
A-	90-93.99	D+	67-69.99
B+	87-89.99	D	64-66.99
B	84-86.99	D-	60-63.99
B-	80-83.99	E	<60
C+	77-79.99	E1	Stopped attending
C	74-76.99	I	Incomplete

Course Readings

- We will read most chapters from Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. London: Profile Books. This will be noted as “A&R” for each week. The book is available for purchase at the university textbook store.
- All other required readings, which are listed down, are available on the canvas site for the course.

Course Schedule*

*The instructor may adjust the reading contents as seen fitted during the semester. A notice will be sent in advance if there is a content change.

Week 1: What is “development”? Concepts, poverty, inequality -- 47 pages in total

Mon 1/12

Class Introduction

Wed 1/14	A&R, Chapter 1: “So Close and Yet So Different” (pp. 7–44). Sen, Amartya. 1999. <i>Development As Freedom</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press. <u>Introduction (pp. 3–11)</u>
Fri 1/16	Case lab: Introduction

Week 2: Modernization: prosperity and order -- 92 pages

Mon 1/19	No class (MLK Day)
Wed 1/21	A&R, Chapter 3: “The Making of Prosperity and Poverty” (pp. 70–95). Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. 1997. “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” <i>World Politics</i> 49 (2): 155–183.
	Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 53(1): 69–105.
Fri 1/23	Case lab: Singapore vs Taiwan

Week 3: Dependency & world-systems; ISI as a political project -- 87 pages.

Mon 1/26	A&R Ch.6 “Drifting Apart” (pp. 152–81).
Wed 1/28	Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis.” <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> 16(4): 387–415.
	Cardoso, Fernando Henrique, and Enzo Faletto. 1979. <i>Dependency and Development in Latin America</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. <u>Introduction (pp. 1–7)</u> and <u>Chapter 2: “Comprehensive Analysis of Development” (pp. 8–28)</u> .
Fri 1/30	Case lab: Argentina

FINAL PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE ON FRIDAY JANUARY 30TH, 11.59PM

Week 4: From ISI to export-led growth (ELI): why some states switched -- 92 pages

Mon 2/2	A&R Ch.10 “The Diffusion of Prosperity” (pp. 274–301).
Wed 2/4	Kohli, Atul. 2004. <i>State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery</i> . Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. <u>Introduction (pp. 1–24)</u> AND <u>Chapter 3: “A Cohesive-Capitalist State Reimposed: Park Chung Hee and Rapid Industrialization” (pp. 84–123)</u> .
Fri 2/6	Case lab: South Korea vs. Thailand

Week 5: Developmental states & “embedded autonomy” -- 86 pages

Mon 2/9 A&R Ch.11 “The Virtuous Circle” (pp. 302–34).

Wed 2/11 Evans, Peter. 1995. *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1: “States and Industrial Transformation” (pp. 3–20).

Doner, Richard F., Bryan K. Ritchie, and Dan Slater. 2005. “Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective.” *International Organization* 59(2): 327–361.

Fri 2/13 Case lab: Malaysia vs. the Philippines

Week 6: Structural Adjustment & the Neoliberal Turn (1980s–2000s) -- 68 pages

Mon 2/16 A&R Ch.13 “Why Nations Fail Today” (pp. 380–403).

Wed 2/18 Weyland, Kurt. 2004. “Neoliberalism and Democracy in Latin America: A Mixed Record.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 46(1): 135–157.

Edwards, Sebastian. 2012. *Left Behind: Latin America and the False Promise of Populism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5: “Chile, Latin America’s Brightest Star” (pp. 101–121).

**(Recommended)* Haggard, Stephan. 2000. *The Political Economy of the Asian Financial Crisis*. Chapter 1: “Introduction: The Political Economy of the Asian Financial Crisis” (pp. 1–14).

Fri 2/20 Case lab: Chile vs Indonesia

Week 7: Democracy and development -- what democracy is and what it does -- 68 pages

Mon 2/23 Quiz #1

Wed 2/25 A&R Ch.14 “Breaking the Mold” (pp. 404–27).

Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. “What Democracy Is... and Is Not.” *Journal of Democracy* 2(3): 75–88.

Ross, Michael. 2006. “Is Democracy Good for the Poor?” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(4): 860–874.

Fri 2/27 Fukuyama, Francis, Chris Dann, and Beatriz Magaloni. “Delivering for Democracy: Why Results Matter.” *Journal of Democracy* 36, no. 2 (2025): 5–19.

Case lab: Brazil vs. India

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE ON FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27TH, 11.59PM

Week 8: Authoritarian regimes and development -- performance, coalitions, and control -- 81 pages

Mon 3/2 A&R Ch.5 “I’ve Seen the Future, and It Works” (pp. 124–51).

Wed 3/4	Slater, Dan, and Joseph Wong. 2022. <i>From Development to Democracy: The Transformations of Modern Asia</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press. <u>Chapter 1: “Democracy through Strength” (pp. 1–25).</u>
	Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. “Dictatorial Institutions and Their Impact on Economic Growth.” <i>European Journal of Sociology</i> 49(1): 3–30.
	*(<i>Recommended</i>) Gallagher, Mary E. 2002. “Reform and Openness”: Why China’s Economic Reforms Have Delayed Democracy. <i>World Politics</i> 54(3): 338–372.
Fri 3/6	Case lab: China vs Vietnam

Week 9: Clientelism, vote buying, and poverty politics -- 84 pages

Mon 3/9	A&R Ch. 12: “The Vicious Circle” (pp. 335–67).
Wed 3/11	Auyero, Javier. 1999. “From the Client’s Point(s) of View”: How Poor People Perceive and Evaluate Political Clientelism. <i>Theory and Society</i> 28(2): 297–334.
	Nichter, Simeon. 2008. “Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 102(1): 19–31
Fri 3/13	Case lab: the Philippines vs Argentina

Week 10: Spring Break -- no class

Week 11: Aid & Humanitarianism -- 49 pages

Mon 3/23,	Barnett, Michael. 2005. “Humanitarianism Transformed.” <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 3(4): 723–740.
Wed 3/25	Regilme Jr., Salvador Santino F., and Obert Hodzi. 2021. “Comparing US and Chinese Foreign Aid in the Era of Rising Powers.” <i>The International Spectator</i> 56(2): 114–31.
	Bräutigam, Deborah. 2011. “Aid ‘With Chinese Characteristics’: Chinese Foreign Aid and Development Finance Meet the OECD-DAC Aid Regime.” <i>Journal of International Development</i> 23(5): 752–64.
Fri 3/27	Case lab: Cambodia

LITERATURE REVIEW DUE ON FRIDAY MARCH 27TH, 11.59PM

Week 12: Conflict, violence, and development -- 94 pages

Mon 3/30	A&R Ch. 9 “Reversing Development.” (pp. 245–73).
	Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2011. “Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 105(3): 478–95.

Wed 4/1	Eaton, Kent, Silvana Huanqui, and Jose Larios. 2024. "Decentralization and Criminal Gangs in El Salvador: Impacts on Municipal Finances and Local Economic Development." <i>The Journal of Development Studies</i> 60(9): 1372–93.
	Abb, Pascal, Saw Kyaw Zin Khay, Indra Overland, and Roman Vakulchuk. 2025. "Road through a Broken Place: The BRI in Post-Coup Myanmar." <i>The Pacific Review</i> 38(4): 593–617.
Fri 4/3	Case lab: Myanmar vs El Salvador

RESEARCH DESIGN DUE ON FRIDAY APRIL 3RD, 11.59PM

Week 13: Natural resources and rentierism -- 63 pages

Mon 4/6, Wed 4/8	Karl, Terry Lynn. 1999. "The Perils of the Petro-State: Reflections on the Paradox of Plenty." <i>Journal of International Affairs</i> 53(1): 31–48.
	Ross, Michael J. 2012. <i>The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations</i> . Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. <u>Chapter 3: "More Petroleum, Less Democracy"</u> (pp. 63–92).
	Smith, Benjamin. 2004. "Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World, 1960–1999." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 48(2): 232–46.
Fri 4/10	Case lab: Venezuela

Week 14: Wrapping up -- 35 pages

Mon 4/13	A&R Ch. 15 "Understanding Prosperity and Poverty" (pp. 428-62).
Wed 4/15	Quiz #2
Fri 4/17	Presentation

Week 15: Presentation

Mon 4/20	Presentation
Wed 4/22	Presentation

FINAL PAPER DUE ON TUESDAY APRIL 28th, MIDDAY 12PM

IMPORTANT NOTES

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see this [link](#).