

**PSCI 559**  
**Historical Political Economy**  
Spring 2025  
Fridays 9:30am-12:30pm, Harkness 329

**Alexander Lee**

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: Fridays 2-3:30. Harkness 327

**Course Goals:**

This course surveys selected topics in the extensive literature on the historical origins of political and economic development. We will focus on differences in formal and informal institutions across countries. Topics will include the determinants of economic growth, the modernization hypothesis, distributional conflict, government corruption, the success and failure of states to deliver of public goods, among others.

**Grading:**

Class Participation — 30%

Three short research proposals (10% each) — 30%

Final Research Proposal — 40%

**Course Policies:**

Unexcused late work will be penalized a whole letter grade, and an additional letter grade for every additional 24 hours of lateness. Plagiarism or cheating will be treated seriously and reported to the Board of Academic Honesty.

**Course Requirements:**

Students must do all required readings, and be prepared to discuss them actively. **(30% of the grade).**

During the course, students must submit and present three short research proposal on a topic relevant to the course material, which should be a maximum of 500 words in length **(10% of the grade each)**. This proposal should outline 1) An existing theoretical or empirical puzzle, 2) an intuition as to a solution to this puzzle, 3) the data needed to test this puzzle, and 4) the identification strategy to be used. Due dates will be assigned on the first day of class.

As a final assignment, students must submit a research proposal that develops one of their shorter proposals, which should be a maximum of 3000 words in length. This proposal should outline include a more detailed literature review, discussion of theoretical hypotheses, and a serious discussion of how to obtain the data. For projects with publicly available data, successful projects will include a rough preliminary analysis. This proposal will be due two weeks after the last day of class

## Readings

### Introduction- January 31st

Kelly, Morgan. "The standard errors of persistence." (2019).

Abad, Leticia Arroyo, and Noel Maurer. "History never really says goodbye: a critical review of the persistence literature." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1.1 (2021): 31-68.

Charnysh, Volha, Eugene Finkel, and Scott Gehlbach. "Historical political economy: Past, present, and future." *Annual Review of Political Science* 26.1 (2023): 175-191.

### Culture and Religion- February 7<sup>th</sup>

Lowes, Sara, et al. "The evolution of culture and institutions: Evidence from the Kuba Kingdom." *Econometrica* 85.4 (2017): 1065-1091.

Becker, Sascha O., and Ludger Woessmann. "Was Weber wrong? A human capital theory of Protestant economic history." *The quarterly journal of economics* 124.2 (2009): 531-596.

Bénabou, Roland, Davide Ticchi, and Andrea Vindigni. 2022. "Forbidden Fruits: The Political Economy of Science, Religion, and Growth." *Review of Economic Studies* 89(4): 357–71.

Fouka, Vasiliki. "Backlash: The unintended effects of language prohibition in US schools after World War I." *The Review of Economic Studies* 87.1 (2020): 204-239.

Weber, Eugene. *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1976. Introduction, Ch.1, 17-18.

### Agrarian Development- February 14<sup>th</sup>

Alesina, Alberto, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn. "On the origins of gender roles: Women and the plough." *The quarterly journal of economics* 128.2 (2013): 469-530.

Dasgupta, Aditya, and Elena Ruiz Ramirez. "Explaining Rural Conservatism: Political Consequences of Technological Change in the Great Plains." *American Political Science Review* (2020): 1-23.

Pengl, Yannick I., Philip Roessler, and Valeria Rueda. "Cash crops, print technologies, and the politicization of ethnicity in Africa." *American Political Science Review* 116.1 (2022): 181-199.

Haber, Stephen, Roy Elis, and Jordan Horrillo. "The ecological origins of economic and political systems." Available at SSRN 3958073 (2021).

Scott, J. C. *Against the grain : a deep history of the earliest states*. Yale University Press. (2017).

### Industrial Development- February 21<sup>st</sup>

Esposito, Elena, and Scott F. Abramson. "The European coal curse." *Journal of Economic Growth* 26.1 (2021): 77-112.

Fresh, Adriane. "Population and Political Change in Industrial Britain." (2022)

Nall, Clayton. "The political consequences of spatial policies: How interstate highways facilitated geographic polarization." *The Journal of Politics* 77.2 (2015): 394-406.

Cermeño, Alexandra L., Kerstin Enflo, and Johannes Lindvall. "Railroads and Reform: How Trains Strengthened the Nation State." *British Journal of Political Science* 52.2 (2022): 715-735.

Fouka, Vicky and Theo Serlin. *Industry and Identity: The Migration Linkage Between Economic and Cultural Change in 19th Century Britain, 2023*

### War- February 28<sup>th</sup>

Scheve, Kenneth, and David Stasavage. "Democracy, war, and wealth: lessons from two centuries of inheritance taxation." *American Political Science Review* 106.1 (2012): 81-102.

- Besley, Timothy, and Marta Reynal-Querol. "The legacy of historical conflict: Evidence from Africa." *American Political Science Review* 108.2 (2014): 319-336.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Tarek A. Hassan, and James A. Robinson. "Social structure and development: A legacy of the Holocaust in Russia." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126.2 (2011): 895-946.
- Schenoni, Luis L. "Bringing war back in: Victory and state formation in Latin America." *American Journal of Political Science* 65.2 (2021): 405-421.
- Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA : Blackwell, 1992. Chapters One and Two.

### **Colonialism- March 7th**

- Lee, Alexander, and Kenneth A. Schultz. "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 7 (2012): 365-410.
- Feyrer, James, and Bruce Sacerdote. "Colonialism and modern income: islands as natural experiments." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 91.2 (2009): 245-262.
- Garfias, Francisco, and Emily A. Sellars. "From conquest to centralization: Domestic conflict and the transition to direct rule." *The Journal of Politics* 83.3 (2021): 992-1009.
- Pierskalla, Jan, Alexander De Juan, and Max Montgomery. "The Territorial Expansion of the Colonial State: Evidence from German East Africa 1890–1909." *British Journal of Political Science* 49.2 (2019): 711-737.
- Acemoglu, Daron Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118: 1231-1294. 2002.

### **Statebuilding- March 21st [No class March 14<sup>th</sup>]**

- Dell, Melissa, and Pablo Querubin. "Nation building through foreign intervention: Evidence from discontinuities in military strategies." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133.2 (2018): 701-764.
- Acemoglu, Daron, et al. "The consequences of radical reform: The French Revolution." *American economic review* 101.7 (2011): 3286-3307.
- Dell, Melissa, Nathan Lane, and Pablo Querubin. "The historical state, local collective action, and economic development in Vietnam." *Econometrica* 86.6 (2018): 2083-2121.
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. "Tilly goes to church: the religious and medieval roots of European state fragmentation." *American Political Science Review* 118.1 (2024): 88-107.
- Herbst, Jeffery. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. Ch. 1 and 4.

### **Land and Property Policy- March 28<sup>th</sup>**

- Lee, Alexander. "Land, State Capacity and Colonialism: Evidence from India" *Comparative Political Studies*, 2019, 52(3), 412-444
- Banerjee, Abhijit, and Lakshmi Iyer. "History, institutions, and economic performance: The legacy of colonial land tenure systems in India." *American economic review* 95.4 (2005): 1190-1213.
- Heldring, Leander, James A. Robinson, and Sebastian Vollmer. "The long-run impact of the dissolution of the English monasteries." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136.4 (2021): 2093-2145.
- Heldring, Leander, James A. Robinson, and Sebastian Vollmer. The economic effects of the English Parliamentary enclosures. No. w29772. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022.
- Scott, James. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Ch.1-2

### **Slavery and Forced Labor-April 4<sup>th</sup>**

- Nunn, Nathan, and Leonard Wantchekon. "The slave trade and the origins of mistrust in Africa." *American Economic Review* 101.7 (2011): 3221-52.
- Dell, Melissa, and Benjamin A. Olken. "The development effects of the extractive colonial economy: The dutch cultivation system in java." *The Review of Economic Studies* 87.1 (2020): 164-203.
- Dell, Melissa. "The persistent effects of Peru's mining mita." *Econometrica* 78.6 (2010): 1863-1903.
- Acharya, Avidit, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. "The political legacy of American slavery." *The Journal of Politics* 78.3 (2016): 621-641.
- Engerman, Stanley L., and Kenneth L. Sokoloff. "Factor endowments, inequality, and paths of development among new world economics." (2002).

### **Why Europe?- April 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Blaydes, Lisa, and Eric Chaney. "The feudal revolution and Europe's rise: Political divergence of the Christian west and the Muslim world before 1500 CE." *American Political Science Review* 107.1 (2013): 16-34.
- Lee, Alexander, and Jack Paine. "The Great Revenue Divergence." *International Organization* (2022): 1-42.
- Ahmed, Ali T., and David Stasavage. "Origins of early democracy." *American Political Science Review* 114.2 (2020): 502-518.
- Jones, Eric. *The European miracle: environments, economies and geopolitics in the history of Europe and Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Ch. 1.
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The great divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy*. Princeton University Press, 2009. P. 3-68

### **Why Northwestern Europe?-April 18<sup>th</sup>**

- Acemoglu, Daron & Simon Johnson & James Robinson. "The Rise of Europe: Atlantic Trade, Institutional Change, and Economic Growth," *American Economic Review*, American Economic Association, vol. 95(3), pages 546-579, June 2005.
- Acharya, Avidit and Alexander Lee. "Path Dependence in European Development: Medieval Politics, Conflict and State Building" *Comparative Political Studies* 2019, 52 (13-14), 2171-2206.
- Abramson, Scott F., and Carles Boix. "Endogenous Parliaments: Urban Agglomeration, Technological Accumulation." *International Organization* 73.4 (2019), pp. 793-837
- Stasavage, David. *Public debt and the Birth of the democratic state: France and Great Britain 1688–1789*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Introduction.
- Mokyr, Joel. *The lever of riches: Technological creativity and economic progress*. Oxford University Press, 1992. Ch.10

### **Why not Southern Italy? April 25<sup>th</sup>**

- Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton university press, 1994.
- Fontana, Nicola, Tommaso Nannicini, and Guido Tabellini. "Historical roots of political extremism: The effects of Nazi occupation of Italy." (2018).
- D'Attoma, John. "Divided nation: The north-south cleavage in Italian tax compliance." *Polity* 49.1 (2017): 69-99.

Caprettini, Bruno, Lorenzo Casaburi, and Miriam Venturini. "Redistribution, voting and clientelism: Evidence from the Italian land reform." (2021).

Banfield, Edward C. *The moral basis of a backward society*. Chicago: The Free Press, 1958, 30-32, 85-104.

### **Why (not) China? May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Fernández-Villaverde, Jesús, et al. "Fractured-land and political fragmentation." Working Paper, 2020.

Dincecco, Mark, and Yuhua Wang. Violent Conflict and Political Development over the Long Run: China versus Europe, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21: 341-58, 201

Jia, Ruixue. "The legacies of forced freedom: China's treaty ports." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 96.4 (2014): 596-608.

Kung, James Kai-sing, and Chicheng Ma. "Can cultural norms reduce conflicts? Confucianism and peasant rebellions in Qing China." *Journal of Development Economics* 111 (2014): 132-149.

Mokyr, Joel. *The lever of riches: Technological creativity and economic progress*. Oxford University Press, 1992. Ch. 9

Diamond, Jared M. *Guns, germs and steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years*. Random House, 1998. Chapter 18.