

Government 2129: Political Economy of Development

Fall 2020, Monday, 3-5 pm

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10-12 and by appointment

Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/80593>

Course description

This graduate seminar provides an overview of the research frontier on governance and accountability in developing countries, including democracies, electoral autocracies, and authoritarian regimes. Topics include voting behavior, direct accountability, decentralization, and the bureaucracy. While including some foundational readings, the syllabus puts emphasis on recent work. Readings primarily draw from comparative politics, political economy, and development economics. In addition to theory and empirics, the course focuses on the nuts and bolts of planning and implementing research and professionalization.

Course objectives

The objectives of this seminar are threefold. First, the substantive aim is to survey the research frontier on the political economy of development, with an emphasis on governance and accountability in low-income countries, and to identify gaps in our understanding. Second, the seminar seeks to equip students with practical skills for planning and implementing research and structuring and conducting data analysis. Third, the seminar aims to professionalize students by exposing you to the academic processes of replicating others' work, writing reviews, presenting research ideas, and writing research proposals.

Requirements

Parts of this seminar are hands-on, and students are expected to have a background in causal inference and statistical programming. You will replicate the data analysis of a recent study, write a peer review of an academic article, and write a research proposal. In addition, you are expected to come to class prepared and ready to discuss the readings. This includes a week where students will present their ideas for their research designs. Students should include three discussion questions prompted by the readings before every class (by Wednesday night) in the Google document linked to on Canvas. In addition, each student will synthesize and critique one

reading orally (indicated with ***). For each of the substantive classes in Part I, a team of students will contribute to guiding the discussion.

- Peer Review: Every student will write one review of a paper from the syllabus.
- Replication: In the second half of the semester, we will conduct three replication exercises. Invited researchers will share the dataset and code for a working paper of theirs in advance of the class. Students will form groups and replicate and extend the analysis, and present findings and suggestions to the class and the invited researcher. Each student will participate in at least one replication exercise.
- Research proposal: 20-30 page research proposal on a topic chosen by the student (in consultation with me). The research proposal can take the form of a grant application (which you should plan to submit) or a detailed pre-analysis plan (for observational or experimental work).

Grades

Research proposal 50%, replication 20%, peer review 10%, participation 20%.

Materials and Access

All course materials are available on Canvas.

Collaboration and academic integrity policy

Students are encouraged to discuss the materials for class with each other. You may also discuss your ideas for your research design, but the writing of assignments must be entirely your own, using standard citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, lectures, discussions, etc.

Topics and Readings

Part I: Recent Work in Political Economy of Development

The first part of this course is structured like a typical graduate seminar. Each week, we will dive into (primarily) recent work on a core topic in political economy of development

Week 1: September 2. Introduction and Electoral Accountability I

Monday classes meet on Wednesday this week

Olken, B.A., Pande, R., 2011. [Governance Review Paper](#). J-PAL Governance Initiative.

Fearon, James D. 1999. "Electoral accountability and the control of politicians: selecting good types versus sanctioning poor performance," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, edited by Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.

Dunning et al., 2019. Voter information campaigns and political accountability: Cumulative findings from a pre-registered meta-analysis of coordinated trials. *Science Advances*.

What makes a good peer review?

Miller et al., 2013. How to be a peer reviewer. PS.

How to write a peer review PLOS One.

September 7 is a university holiday

Week 2: September 14. Electoral accountability II and Clientelism

You can begin submitting peer reviews this week.

***Oforu, George Kwaku. 2019. Do Fairer Elections Increase the Responsiveness of Politicians? *American Political Science Review*.

Platas, Melina and Pia Raffler. 2020. Closing the Gap: Information and Mass Support in a Dominant Party Regime. *Journal of Politics*.

***Gottlieb, Jessica. 2020. Keeping the State Weak to Prevent Collective Claim-Making in Young Democracies. *Revise & Resubmit at American Political Science Review*.

Nathan, Noah. 2018. Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition, Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 9.

Blattman, Chris, Horacio Larreguy, Benjamin Marx, and Otis Reid. 2020. Eat Widely, Vote Wisely? Lessons from a Campaign Against Vote Buying in Uganda.

Week 3: September 21. Non-electoral accountability

Banerjee, Abhijit, Lakshmi Iyer, and Rohini Somanathan. 2007. "Public Action for Public Goods," in *Handbook of Development Economics*, edited by T. Paul Schultz and John A. Strauss, Elsevier. [Chapter 49]

Raffler, P., Posner, D.N., Parkerson, D, 2018. The Weakness of Bottom-Up Accountability: Experimental Evidence from the Ugandan Health Sector. *Working Paper*

Lieberman, E.S., Posner, D.N. and Tsai, L.L., 2014. Does information lead to more active citizenship? Evidence from an education intervention in rural Kenya. *World Development*, 60, pp.69-83.

***Laudati, A., E. Mvukiyehe, P. van der Windt. 2020. Community and/or Government Participation to Improve Accountability and Public Services? Experimental Evidence from Congo. *Working Paper*

Further reading:

Ostrom, Elinor. 1998. "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action: Presidential Address." *American Political Science Review* 92(1):1-22.

Week 4: September 28. Taxation and formalization

This week, we'll dig into the six projects constituting the second EGAP Metaketa round, reading both pre-analysis plans and papers. You can find an overview of the Metaketa initiative [here](#) and of this particular round [here](#).

Brazil: Zucco, C., Lenz, A.K., Goldszmidt, R. and Valdivia, M., 2020. Face-to-face vs. virtual assistance to entrepreneurs: Evidence from a field experiment in Brazil. *Economics Letters*, 188, p.108922. [PAP](#) | [Partnership lessons](#)

Colombia: Darin Christensen, Francisco Garfias. The Politics of Property Taxation: Fiscal Infrastructure and Electoral Incentives in Brazil. *Journal of Politics*, 2020. [PAP](#) | [Partnership lessons](#)

Congo: Weigel, J.L., 2020. The participation dividend of taxation: how citizens in Congo engage more with the state when it tries to tax them. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 135(4), pp.1849-1903. [PAP](#) | [Partnership lessons](#)

India: Gaikwad, Nikhar, Gareth Nellis and Anjali Thomas. The Effect of Citizen Empowerment on Fee-Based Public Service Provision and Urban Governance in India. [PAP](#) | [Partnership lessons](#)

Malawi: Bowers, Jake, Nuole Chen, Christopher Grady, Matthew Winters. Collective Action and Solid Waste Collection in Zomba, Malawi. [PAP](#) | [Partnership lessons](#)

Week 5: October 5. Bureaucracy

Pepinsky, T.B., Pierskalla, J.H. and Sacks, A., 2017. Bureaucracy and Service Delivery. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, pp.249-268.

***Gulzar, S. and Pasquale, B.J., 2017. Politicians, Bureaucrats, and Development: Evidence from India. *American Political Science Review*, 111(1), pp.162-183.

Martin, L.E., Raffler, P., 2020. Fault Lines: The Effects of Bureaucratic Power on Electoral Accountability. *American Journal of Political Science*.

Brierley, S., 2020. Unprincipled Principals: Co-opted Bureaucrats and Corruption in Ghana. *American Journal of Political Science*.

Raffler, P., 2018. Does Political Oversight of the Bureaucracy Increase Accountability? Field Experimental Evidence from an Electoral Autocracy. *Revise & Resubmit at American Political Science Review*.

October 12 is a university holiday

Week 6: October 19. Autocratic and hybrid regimes

Last day to submit a peer review

Magaloni, B., 2006. Voting for autocracy: Hegemonic party survival and its demise in Mexico. Cambridge University Press.

Truex, R., 2016. *Making autocracy work: representation and responsiveness in modern China*. Cambridge University Press.

Hassan, M., 2017. The strategic shuffle: Ethnic geography, the internal security apparatus, and elections in Kenya. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(2), pp.382-395.

***Young, L.E., 2018. The psychology of state repression: Fear and dissent decisions in Zimbabwe. *American Political Science Review*, pp.1-16.

Myerson, Roger B. 2008. 'The Autocrat's Credibility Problem and Foundations of the Constitutional State.' *American Political Science Review*. 102(1): 125-139.

Part II: Planning your research

In the second part of the course, we switch gears to talk about practical and ethical aspects of research implementation and your own research ideas.

Week 7: October 26. The nuts and bolts and ethics of data collection

How do you collect your own data? What are the ethical implications of doing so? In this session, we will talk about best practices of primary and secondary data collection, also in light of the pandemic.

Glennster, R. and Takavarasha, K., 2013. *Running randomized evaluations: A practical guide*. Princeton University Press.

***Cronin-Furman, K. and Lake, M., 2018. Ethics abroad: Fieldwork in fragile and violent contexts. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, pp.1-8.

IPA's [Research Protocols](#)

EGAP Methods Guide: [Ten Things to Know About Survey Design](#)

EGAP Methods Guide: [Ten Things to Know About Survey Implementation](#)

[Restarting Face-to-Face Data Collection](#) (IPA)

Week 8: November 2. Integrating quantitative and qualitative research

Much of the leading work in political economy of development draws on both qualitative and quantitative methods in an iterative manner. In this session, we will talk about different approaches of integrating quantitative and qualitative research and about conducting qualitative work in pandemic times.

Humphreys, M. and Jacobs, A.M., 2015. Mixing methods: A Bayesian approach. *American Political Science Review*, 109(4), pp.653-673.

***Thachil, T., 2018. Improving Surveys Through Ethnography: Insights from India's Urban Periphery. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 53(3), pp.281-299.

Levy Paluck, E., 2010. The promising integration of qualitative methods and field experiments. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 628(1), pp.59-71.

Fearon, J.D. and Laitin, D.D., 2009. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*.

Week 9: November 9. Presentation of research proposals

This session will be structured as a mini-workshop. Each student will (a) circulate a memo summarizing their research idea in advance and (b) provide written comments on another student's memo and discuss it in class. Everyone is expected to come to class

prepared to offer constructive feedback on all other memos. The aim of this session is to make everyone's research better.

November 16: No meeting, we will meet on December 6 instead

Part III: Replication exercises

In the third part of the course, you will work on the replication and extension of the analyses in current working papers. Our visitors will share their data, code, and papers in advance. In small teams, you will aim to replicate the analyses presented in the paper, think of robustness tests and possible extensions, and then present your findings and suggestions to the class and our visitor. No better way to see how the sausage is made and to impress scholars from other universities. Each student will work on 1-2 replication teams depending on the size of the class.

Week 10: November 23. Replication class I with Gareth Nellis (UCSD)

Overcoming the Political Exclusion of Migrants: Theory and Experimental Evidence from India (with Nikhar Gaikwad)

Week 11: November 30. Replication class II with Jessica Gottlieb (TAMU)

Formalization, Tax Appeals, and Social Intermediaries: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Lagos, Nigeria (with Adrienne LeBas and Janica Magat)

Week 12. December 7. Replication class III with Saad Gulzar (Stanford)

Representation and Forest Conservation: Evidence from India's Scheduled Areas (with Apoorva Lal and Benjamin Pasquale)