PO8037: The Political Economy of Economic Development

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Office Hours: Friday 10am-12pm

Hilary Term 2018 • Tuesday 12-2pm • Arts PX201 – Weeks 22-26

Course description

Despite rising income levels and improvements in a variety of indicators, a large share of the global population continues to live in poverty, to suffer from illiteracy, and to die from preventable diseases. This course represents an introduction to the development economics literature. It will critically examine existing economic theory about where development comes from as well as examining the role that political actors (e.g. domestic governments, trading partners, international organizations) play in the development process.

We will cover a range of topics in the development literature – what do we mean by development? How do countries develop? How can national government facilitate this process? When do they hinder it? What role is there for external actors, such as wealthy states? Do international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF help or hinder the development process? What types of interventions can foster development outcomes?

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Critically analyse the concept of development.
2. Critically review competing explanations for why some countries are rich while others are poor.
3. Describe the different growth strategies employed by developing nations over the course of the twentieth century.
4. To examine the different roles that various actors play in the development process.
5. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of policies aimed at fostering development.

Assessment
Participation (20%)

Student participation and discussion is a central aspect of the seminar. Students are expected to come to the seminar having done the readings and prepared to discuss the topics. Assessment of students’ participation will be based on the quality of input into seminar discussion.

Students should come prepared to discuss the following:

- The arguments made in the assigned readings (are they convincing? Is one more convincing than the others?)
- The method being used (what is it? Is it appropriate? Would another one be more appropriate?)
- The quality of the evidence for the authors’ arguments
- Possible future research/extensions to the assigned papers

Points for discussion (20%)

Students must submit discussion points in weeks 2-5 of the module. These discussion points relate to the required readings that have been assigned for the week. Having read the assigned papers, you should put forward three numbered points or questions that you think these papers raise. You are not required to do any detailed analysis or discussion but each point should be 1-2 paragraphs long (each paper should be no more than 500-600 words in total).

These discussion points will be graded on the basis of:

- Engagement with the assigned material
- Originality in terms of the insight presented
- Ability to critique the material in the readings (in terms of the theory or empirical evidence it presents, the conclusions it draws etc.)
- Ability to draw comparisons between the papers that have been assigned
- Ability to bring in insights from theories that you have previously engaged with (in prior weeks of the course, in other modules etc.)

When writing your discussion points you should ask these types of questions:

- How convincing is the argument that the author(s) is/are making?
- Is the empirical evidence that is being presented of sufficient quality to be able to support the claims being made?
- Do the conclusions that are being drawn follow logically from the evidence presented?
- Do the conclusions of one paper contradict or challenge those of another?
- Are there any issues that the authors have failed to properly engage with?
- What points are worth exploring further?
Papers are **due at 5pm on the day before the seminar.**

All discussion points should be submitted as a single document via Turnitin.

**Research design paper (60%)**

Each student will write a research design paper proposing a project related to economic development. Students must clearly identify a research question that their proposed project would answer. They must clearly identify the variation that they hope to explain, the key factors that they think will explain it (i.e. their theory), and then outline the way in which they would go about testing their theory (i.e. the methods they would use).

Students are not expected to do any of the analysis, but they should demonstrate an awareness of the issues associated with the conducting the research, including the following:

- Conceptualization of variables
- Measurement of variables
- Data availability/limitations
- Ethical issues
- Overall feasibility of the project

Research design papers should be submitted via Turnitin.

In order to submit papers via Turnitin, you must first enrol in the class using the following information:

- **Class ID:** 20066975
- **Enrolment key:** PO8037

Papers should be approximately 3,000 words, excluding the bibliography (the usual rule of 10% over or under the word count applies but students should note that papers that exceed these limits with be penalized).

**NB:** Students must receive approval from the lecturer for their topics; no student may pass the module unless the research topic has been approved in advance. Students must submit a brief summary of a paragraph via email by **9th February.**

**Academic honesty and plagiarism**

The university takes plagiarism very seriously. There are severe penalties associated with passing someone else’s work off as one’s own. Remember that careless note-taking can lead to this happening: you must enclose direct quotations in quotation marks, and even when paraphrasing, ensure that a reference is provided.
The university’s policy regarding plagiarism can be found at: http://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/general-regulations/plagiarism.php.

Reading list

The following textbook, available from the TCD library, provides an in-depth analysis of the issues covered in the seminar:


Many different versions of this textbook are available from Trinity’s library, including some more up-to-date versions. The chapters listed below are from the 11th edition. The content does not change much in the 12th edition or the 10th but the organisation of the book may be slightly different.

Where chapters for this textbook are assigned as required readings this is for the purposes of clarifying the concepts used in the other assigned readings (chiefly academic papers) and providing an overview of the different perspectives for that week’s topic(s).

Some other key texts in the field are the following:


For those interested in the history of trade and globalization, the following are invaluable resources:


Topics and assigned readings

*These readings are subject to change. Additional material may be added.*
Week 1: Introduction: what is development and where does it come from? (22\textsuperscript{nd} January)

Discussion questions

- How do we define development?
- Can we think about development in different ways?
- What different growth strategies have been employed over the course of the twentieth century?
- Which ones have been effective?
- Can these strategies be adapted to other contexts? Why/why not?

Required readings


Recommended readings


**Week 2: The state and development (29th January)**

**Discussion questions**

• What is the role of the state in development?
• Why are strong institutions important?
• What are the consequences of having a weak state?
• Can the problem of low state capacity be overcome?

**Required readings**


**Recommended readings**

• Collier, P. (2008). *The bottom billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*. Oxford University Press, USA.
Week 3: The role of external actors I: trade and aid (5th February)

Discussion questions

- What role do aid and trade play in economic development?
- What are the issues surrounding providing trade to LDCs?
- Who gains from trade? Who loses?

Required readings


Recommended readings

- Easterly, W. (2006). The White Man’s Burden: why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good. Penguin Group USA.

Week 4: The role of external actors II: IMF and World Bank (12th February)

Discussion questions

• What role do the IMF and World Bank play in countries’ development?
• How has the role changed over time?

Required readings


Recommended readings

Week 5: Micro interventions (19th February)

Discussion questions

- What are some small-scale interventions that can lead to better development outcomes?
- What are some important considerations when designing interventions in developing countries?

Required readings


Recommended readings


Assessment deadlines

Weekly discussion points should be submitted by 5pm on the day before the seminar. The final paper should be submitted at midnight.
We understand that sometimes it is necessary to ask for an extension on a paper. These will be granted if there are extenuating circumstances. However, no extensions will be granted unless students contact the lecturer in advance of the deadline.

A late penalty of 5 points per day or part thereof will apply if no extension has been granted.

The deadlines for the assessments are as follows:

- 28th January: discussion questions 1 (5%)
- 4th February: discussion questions 2 (5%)
- 11th February: discussion questions 3 (5%)
- 18th February: discussion questions 4 (5%)
- 7th March: research design paper (60%)