Political Science 259
Survey of Political Economy

Professor Daniel Treisman
Department of Political Science
3365 Bunche Hall
treisman@polisci.ucla.edu
Office Hours: Thurs 2:00-3:00 pm

I About the seminar

The seminar surveys recent work on a variety of important topics in political economy. These include the determinants of economic growth and development; the politics of international trade; and monetary and fiscal policy. The course aims to build familiarity with both substantive research issues and methodological approaches. It involves the application of formal modeling and statistical techniques to analyzing the many interactions of economics and politics. Some familiarity with statistical methods, basic calculus, and basic economics is recommended.

II Readings

Copies will be available via the course website for all readings except:


You will need to buy this book, which we will read most of in Week 6. It is relatively inexpensive.

III Requirements

Attendance and preparation are required. You should have done all the reading carefully before class and be prepared to discuss all of the articles. Participation in the discussion throughout the course will count for 40 percent of the course grade.

Part of the time, we will go over the details of formal models. You will not be graded down for asking questions and revealing that you did not understand something. You should ask questions if you do not understand. The goal here is to familiarize you with important models of major political-economy phenomena.

Part of the time, we will discuss material other than formal models. I expect you to have read the assigned articles carefully and to have thought about the ideas, methods, and evidence they contain. To
get a good participation grade, you will need to participate in the discussion and show by your comments that you have read carefully and thought about the material.

Each student will write three short papers on the readings for any three of the weeks from week 3 to week 9. These commentaries should be no longer than 1,500 words, including title, references, and footnotes. (If referring to assigned readings, no need to include full reference, but do cite author and page number—e.g. (Drazen, p.115).) Please put the word count at the end of the paper, and if it is greater than 1,500, please clearly mark the 1,500th word, so that I know when to stop reading.

These commentaries should not merely summarize the readings. They should evaluate them critically, note points of agreement or disagreement, and discuss important issues that they raise. Where possible, you may also suggest further questions for research. You may want to focus on a particular topic or problem raised in the week’s readings and discuss how different authors approach this problem (in some weeks, readings will lend themselves to this, in others they won’t). Papers need not address all the readings in a given week, but they should refer to at least two. They should be well-organized and well-written. Papers are due by 3 pm on the Monday before the class meets at my office, Bunche 3365 (not in my mailbox). Late commentaries will not be accepted. These will count for 45 percent of the course grade.

In addition, each student will make a short (no more than 10 minute) presentation, summarizing and critiquing one of the readings. We will agree on which reading each student will take in one of the early classes. This presentation will count for 15 percent of the course grade.

The course will assume knowledge of basic calculus, microeconomics, game theory, and statistics.

IV Course meetings and topics

NOTE: YOU NEED TO DO THE READING FOR WEEK 1 (GEHLBACH, CHAPTERS 1-2, 7) BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS ON MARCH 29.

1. Models of voting (March 29)

   Downsian models, “citizen-candidate” models
   I recommend you buy this book.
   Retrospective voting models

2. Fiscal policy (April 5)

   Overview
   Allan Drazen, Political Economy in Macroeconomics, pp.679-707.
   Redistribution
Budget deficits and debt

Fiscal adjustment

3. Monetary policy (April 12)

Quantity Theory of Money and Inflation

Phillips curves and monetary neutrality

Time consistency problem

Inflation around the world

NO CLASS APRIL 19!

4. Political business cycles and elections (April 26)

Political business cycles

5. International Trade models (May 3)

Theory
You’ll need to buy this book.
Political implications

6. Globalization debates (May 10)

   Overview

   Trade

   Capital flows

NO CLASS MAY 17!

7. Growth I: explaining the short-run growth rate (May 24)

   Conditional convergence and growth accounting

   Why things are more complicated
8. Growth II: Long-run economic development (May 31)

Overview and increasing returns

Geography

Institutions