The international politics of development  
(draft syllabus)

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This course gives an overview of recent approaches to the international and global politics of development. What do organizations and actors such as donor countries’ aid agencies, INGOs or the World Bank do? Do they really want development, fighting poverty or reducing inequality, or do they serve other purposes? How weak are developing countries really? And when or why do countries implement policy reforms that supposedly ‘develop’ their societies and economies. The course will begin by looking at major concepts and theories of development. It will also discuss the historical evolution of the concepts and practices of development. It will then talk about the relationship between globalization and development (flows of capital, people, goods and services). Next comes a discussion of ‘hard power’ in development politics: the role of international financial organizations, bilateral aid etc. Finally it will move over to ‘soft power’ politics: international policy diffusion, emulation and forms of policy learning when it comes to fighting poverty and inequality, or ‘developing’ entire economies.

General Learning Outcomes: Students should get a comprehensive overview over the main theoretical debates in the field. They will learn not only to apply these theories, but also to engage with them critically. They will learn to identify the main developmental strategies of poor countries for growth and poverty reduction. They should also be able to discuss the key strengths and weaknesses of these strategies.

Specific Learning Outcomes

- Understand the politics underlying international development, inequality and strategies of poverty reduction
- Discuss and critically compare the three major theoretical approaches:
  - How does development happen (economic theories)?
  - Who wants it, who doesn’t (political-economy approaches)?
  - Are we asking the right questions (critical approaches)?
- Get an overview and the capacity to critically assess major strategies:
  - Official development assistance & debt relief,
  - Macroeconomic policies, (de-)regulation & liberalization
  - The role of political institutions and political processes
  - Social and anti-poverty policies
- Be able to read and evaluate the scholarly literature
  - Understand and criticize articles of all main meta-theoretical predispositions
  - Build a survey of literature for the thesis project that does not select on basis of methodological or meta-theoretical criteria, but entirely on basis of suitability for the topic.

Communication and course materials
Most core readings are available on the course website on e-learning or accessible via hyperlink. On
occasional basis I encourage students to pick up copies of books in the library to familiarize themselves not only with the indicated chapter, but with the entire volume.

Seminars organization
Teaching skills are an important part of a PhD student’s experience. Organizing seminars and activating students is a key element in this experience. For this reason the seminars are student-lead. Students take turns in ‘running the session’ (chairing), which includes allocating additional reading to other course participants in advance, and organizing and managing class discussions, with the support of the course instructor.

Readings:
There are usually two required readings each week for everyone. The first reading mainly gives a broad overview of the topic. The chair of each session needs to make sure that each participant picks one additional reading and introduces it to the class. The second reading talks about a more specific topic/research question. Students can freely choose under two conditions: a) sometimes I highlight a very important reading with ‘**’ which should be picked by at least one of the students, b) I also want to see students choosing occasionally articles beyond their ‘comfort zone’, i.e. for the quant students to choose critical/postmodern stuff, and for the post-X students to pick quantitative/rationalist studies.

This is a PhD class which assumes some basic familiarity with social, political and economic concepts and theories. For students who have problems with the scholarly readings I recommend consulting textbooks:

Other:
There will also be smaller assignments on an occasional basis.

Term Papers:
Term papers can take several forms.
The main form of term papers is a discussion of the state of the art of the literature in a specific area of this course. This includes a proper identification of the body of literature in this field, usually based on an explicit research question that binds together these contributions, a thoroughly discussion of important streams, approaches, controversies in this field, as well as a critically way to deal with the studies (appraisal where appraisal is due, criticism, where it seems appropriate).
For students with a key interest in quantitative studies, a term paper can be a replication study of one important article in the field. For those interested, I will give further information on demand. The study needs to be in the field of comparative & international political economy of development, the data needs to be easily accessible and the student need to have the necessary statistical and software skills to perform such a replication study.
Assessment
Class participation, small assignments and ‘running’ sessions (40 %)
Term paper, draft version (40%), Deadline Week 10
Term paper, final version (20 %), Deadline April ?

Week 1/1 Introduction: What is Development?

Required

• Wainaina talks about why he wrote How to Write About Africa in these YouTube videos: Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3

Further


Key Questions: What are development, growth, inequality and poverty? Why not happiness, welfare or wellbeing? Why study it? Should we study it? How to study it? How to measure development, growth, inequality and poverty? What cross-country and cross-time variation do we see? What are the relationships between the concepts?

Week 1/2: Economic Theories of Development

Required
Further
Chang, H.-J. (2003) Kicking away the ladder: development strategy in historical perspective. New York: Anthem Press, chapter 1 (why the West did not do in the past, what it preaches today)

Other
Thilo’s Paper on take off (s to be added)

Key Questions: What are the implications of old and new theories of growth? Does economics have a theory of poverty and inequality? Do the theories work empirically?

Week 2/1: The History of Thought in Development

Required

Further
* Chang, Ha-Joon. 2003. Kicking away the ladder: development strategy in historical perspective. New York: Anthem Press, chapter 1 and?
* Leys, Colin. 1996. The Rise and Fall of Development Theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Marxist approach to development, see also his 1977 article on the elearning platfform), chapters 1 and 4 or 9
Other: A pop science version: Ian Morris, Why the West Rules for Now

Key questions: how did historical thinking about development evolve? What does this imply for policy (is theory important for practice, let alone good)? How does heterodox development theory look like?

Week 2/2: Long-Term Perspective: Geography, Culture, Institutions

Required

Further
http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty/jason.snyder/albouy.pdf)
Landes, David. 2006. "Why Europe and the West? Why Not China?" Journal of Economic Perspectives, 20:2, pp. 3-22. (was China hostile to innovation?)
* Sachs, Jeffrey 2003 (http://www.nber.org/papers/w9490) (role of nature in development)

Other
cf. also why Sweden fails the MDGs (Hans Rosling video and then again see him here)
Key Questions: What are the causal long-term determinants of growth and inequality? How does growth and inequality depend on nature, geography and culture? Are these determinants still valid today?

**Week 3/1: The Political Economy of Development: Why not everyone in a poor country might want to have development**

Required

Further:
Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press. (how governments exploit markets)
* Wantchekon, L. (2003). Clientelism and Voting Behaviour. Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin. World Politics, 55, 399-422. (how important is clientelism?)

Other:
Easterly’s talk on the myth of benevolent autocrats
(http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2011/05/easterly_on_ben.html)

Key Questions: Who wants development? And why? Do elites in poor countries want it? When are there problems to be expected? Who are key stakeholders?

**Week 3/2: Critical Theories of Development: The Focus on Development is the Problem!**

Required

Further:

Other
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-jSQD5FVxE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-jSQD5FVxE) (How not to write about Africa, again)

Key Questions: Is development a good idea? The side effects of development? Is development a concept of control, rationalization? Does framing stigmatize its object?

**Week 4/1: International Trade, (Neoliberal) Reform and Development**

Required
Rogoff in Oxford Handbook

Further
Todaro and Smith 2003: chapter 12
Does opening or closing work? Does deregulation work? What role does the state play in that? What are the consequences? Who wins and looses and why does this affect development and growth?

**Week 4/2: International Finance and Development**


Further:


Key questions: How are finance and development related? Who promotes free flow of capital? When does capital capture the state, and when does the state capture capital?
Week 5/1: International Migration

Required:

Suggested:

Key questions: What patterns of international migration do we see? What does international migration do to growth and poverty? Why do migration policies look the way they do?

Week 5/2:

Remittances? Other finance topic? Other topic?

Week 6/1: Does Aid Work?

Required:

Further:
* William Easterly (2009) "Can the West Save Africa?" *Journal of Economic Literature* 47(2).

More recent articles using more sophisticated techniques

cf. also aid effectiveness [OECD (declaration)], [OECD (why it should work)] and [OECD (an example)]

Key Questions: Does aid work? If so, how? If not, why? How do we improve aid effectiveness?

Week 6/2: The Political Economy of Development: Why Donors might not deliver

Required

Further
Bodenstein/ Kemmerling: Is there a Paradox of Redistribution in Foreign Aid? Fc. in World Development

Other

Week 7/1: The Role of IMF and Debt

Required

Further
**Barkbu et al. 2012**
* Dreher et al. 2015 Politics and IMF conditionality http://jcr.sagepub.com/content/59/1/120.abstract
* Gilpin 2001 chapter 9
* Helleiner chapter 2014 in Ravenhill

**Key Questions:** And forgive us our debts? Why did some countries accumulate debt in the first place? What are the political effects?

**Week 7/2: WTO and Trade Regime**

**Required**
* Gilpin chapter 8
* Oatley 2012 chapter 2


*more*

**Week 8/1: International Diffusion of Policies**

**Required**

**Further**

**Week 8/2**

More on diffusion or another topic?

**Week 9/1 Social Policies (CCTs, Basic Income)**

Required
http://pas.sagepub.com/content/43/4/551.full.pdf+html

Further
* Blattman et al. study on unconditional cash transfers in Uganda
http://www.diw.de/documents/dokumentenarchiv/17/diw_01.c.423735.de/blattman_fiala_martinez_may2013.pdf
* Sabates-Wheeler et al 2015 on targeting and social policy

Other: See also blogs of Chris Blattman and Lant Pritchett
Week 9/2 Welfare State: The Politics of Redistribution in the Open Economy.

Required:

Further

Key questions: What kinds of welfare state do poor countries have? Do they influence inequality and poverty? What do they do to growth? And what role of welfare policy is there in an open economy?
**Week 12/2 Discussion of Papers**

**Potential Other Topics**

**Remittances**

Ahmed 2012 in APSR, Tyburski 2012 in ISQ, Pfitze
Adams, R. H. a. P., John (2005) "Do International Migration and Remittances Reduce Poverty in Developing Countries?" World Development Volume

**Humanitarian Aid**

Required

Further

**Microfinance: From Boom to Bust**

Required:

Further

Other
See also www.themix.org for data; case study on micro finance meltdown in Andhra Pradesh

**State Capacity**

Braeutigam et al. 2008 in CUP: Taxation and State Building in Developing Countries

Soiffer, Hillel

Also Rothstein on Quality of Government

Podcast with Binyavanga Wainaina: “The Ethics of Aid: One Kenyan’s Perspective” (or see transcript)

**Developmental Strategies: ISI versus Export-Led Growth**

Required:
Bates in Oxford Handbook  

**Politics of Evaluation and Development**

Required


Further
Sanderson 2002 Evaluation, Policy Learning, and Evidence-Based Policy Making in Public Administration
Also Chris Blattman on Evaluation 2.0 (chrisblattman.com) (new vogues in evaluation)
Appendix: How to Assess the Quality of a Research Paper (work in progress)

Reading loads are not too high (in general, 1 overview and one specialized article), but some of the articles are hard to understand. You need to read the articles carefully and critically. It is not enough to merely summarize the main argument (although this can be a major challenge in itself). While it is near to impossible to give common standards of assessment for all main streams of approaches (from positivist to postpositivist), I try to give you a checklist which covers common and distinct criteria for evaluating the readings. Note that there are no natural thresholds for these standards. For example, what counts as parsimonious in one area/approach/topic might still be over-simplifying in another. And yet, extreme wordy filibustering is never good scientific practice.

For all articles

- How does this article relate to the existing literature? Does it produce straw-men (‘the neoliberal model’, ‘the postmarxist perspective’...)? Does it systematically omit literature? Is there a bias to the most recent/most western/most US American etc. sources?
- What is the research question? Is it well specified (implicitly or explicitly)?
- What type of approach is chosen? Positivist/postpositivist, explaining/understanding, causal/interpretative? Does the logic of the paper follow the meta-theoretical perspective? Does it oversell the weaknesses of alternative positions? Does it over- or undersell the problem of incommensurability?
- What kind of mode of inquiry does the paper use? Theory-building, empirical investigation, testing, pattern seeking, interpretation? How does the paper handle empirics and data? Does it cherry pick sources/data? Does the article make its own argument contra-intuitive and hard to show, or does it make its ‘life’ easy by using the most convenient methods/approaches/sources/data?
- How transparent is the use of data, sources? Are violations of transparency/replicability/reliability justified on basis of the nature of the data and sources?
- Is the wording/writing simple enough to follow, the writing style lean?

For ‘rationalist’ articles

- Theory: is it internally consistent and logical, novel? Are the significant omissions that might affect the plausibility? How specific or general is the theory? How is it related to other approaches
- Does the study hide behind mathiness in theory or methods? Is it parsimonious? Is it over-simplifying?
- How does the study deal with contingent, reflexive, historical facts?
- Hypotheses: Do they follow from the theory? Are there plausible causal mechanisms? Are the hypotheses general, specific, closed, ...
- Research Design: Is the design adequate for theory/data (experimental, quasi-experimental, case study etc.) external and internal validity? Measurement and operationalization of key concepts? Hawthorne or other effects that might yield bias?
- Testing: Is there endogeneity, selection bias, omitted variable bias? Are the results robust? Is the data structure taken care of (e.g. multi-level, nested, panel, time-series...)? Coefficient fishing?
• Case studies: How are cases selected? Could there be bias? Is there redundancy or lack of variation?
• Mixed methods: are there synergies or contradictions? Why combination picked that way? Does triangulation, nesting, etc. work?
• Conclusions: Do the implications follow from the findings? If any, do policy recommendation, normative conclusions relate to findings? Over- or underselling the findings?

For interpretative/ discursive/ postmodern articles

• Concept formation: Does the article hide behind unnecessarily difficult and opaque terminology? Could what have been said, have been said in simpler terms? Is there evidence for obfuscation? Are there unnecessary neologisms?
• Shielding against criticism: Is the argument too hermetic to be suitable for criticisms? What type of counter-argument could be made to reject the claims exposed in the article? Is there a black swan that would show inherent deficiencies? If the article does not want to be falsifiable, what other standard does it allow to be measured against?
• Interpretative bias: As human acts, all types of interpretation are theoretically equally desirable. However, in social science some stories/ narratives/ interpretations are collectively more interesting than others. How does the author justify his/ her personal reading/ interpreting/ poaching of the data/ material/ theories? Why did the author select this kind of material and not other?
• Does the article exaggerate the role of historical, contingent or interpretative facts? Does it neglect the importance of alternative explanations/ interpretations/ stories?