Autocracy, Democracy, and Prosperity

Prof. Sebastian M. Saiegh
ssaiegh@ucsd.edu
858-534-7237

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00AM-12:00PM, office SSB #365.

Course Description

This course considers the interplay between factor endowments, political institutions and economic performance. It focuses on the connection between representative political institutions and the emergence and expansion of markets.

Format

The class will meet three times per week for the duration of the quarter. Class sessions will be conducted as lectures. Each meeting will be devoted to a new theme/idea related to the link between political institutions and economic performance. Each of the topics presented in class is paired with one required reading. The lectures will review the concepts discussed in these readings, but should be taken neither as a duplication nor as a substitute for them. In other words, you should not assume that because you came to class, you can skip the readings, and/or that because you made the readings you may not attend the lectures. You will notice that I have limited the number of readings each week. I want us to focus on the key concepts of the arguments made, the logic used, and how the arguments are tested. You should read the materials keeping this aim in mind. Also, you may find it helpful to reread the material after it was discussed in class.
The pace of this course will be fast and some of the readings will be quite complex. You should not be discouraged by this. In most cases, understanding these readings will take patience more than anything else. Nonetheless, some basic knowledge of economics and statistics would be useful.

Assignments

Each week students are expected to read the materials. Students are expected to write two short essays (1-2 pages each), take a midterm exam, and final exam. The short essays should focus on the main ideas discussed in a particular week’s readings. The emphasis should be on how the arguments are presented, and how the problem at hand can be better examined. These papers should not be summaries of the readings or other forms of surveys of the literature. I want you to think about how you would address the issues discussed in the readings. You should do one of the papers on weeks 2-4, and the other one on weeks 5-7. The midterm exam is worth 25% of the final grade. The sum of the assignments (the short essays) account for 20% of the final grade and the final exam accounts for 45% of the final grade. Discussion and general class participation accounts for the remaining 10%. Extensions, incompletes, etc. will be given in accordance with UCSD policy. Except under very pressing circumstances, they will be discouraged.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. Students in this course are expected to comply with UCSD’s Policy on Integrity of Scholarship. In particular, plagiarism is considered a dishonest practice and a serious academic offense. Hence, there will be a zero tolerance policy with respect to these practices: any student violating the obligation of academic integrity during the term will automatically fail the class. Copies of the current version of the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, also commonly referred to as the Academic Dishonesty Policy, may be found on the Academic Senate webpage: http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/AcademicIntegrity/AcademicIntegrity.htm

Disabilities. If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify the OSD, call (858) 534-4382 to schedule an appointment.
Course Materials

Readings are drawn from two books available for purchase, and from articles available off the Web through the UCSD Library System (marked in this syllabus by *). In addition there are some readings drawn from book chapters, and non-electronic journals. These articles (marked by **) will be made available by the instructor.

Required Books


Course Outline and Readings

*September 29 - Introduction*

*Week 1 (October 1 - October 5) - Growth Mechanics*

October 1: Growth and Prosperity (Easterly, ch. 1)
October 3: Mechanics of Growth I (Easterly, ch. 2)
October 5: Mechanics of Growth II (Easterly, ch. 3)

*Week 2 (October 8 - October 12) - Incentives and Growth*

October 8: Incentives and Growth I (Easterly, ch. 8)
October 10: Incentives and Growth II (Easterly, ch. 9)
October 12: Random Shocks and Growth (Easterly, ch. 10)

*Week 3 (October 15 - October 19) - Property Rights and Growth*

October 15: Property Effects (De Soto, ch. 2)
October 19: Extralegality (De Soto, ch. 3)
October 19: Informal Law (De Soto, ch. 6)

*Week 4 (October 22 - October 26) - Law and Order*

October 22: Spontaneous Order

October 24: Organized Violence


October 26: A Neoclassical Theory of the State


** Week 5 (October 29 - November 2) - The Logic of Power

October 29: Power and Prosperity


October 31: Review.

November 2: Midterm Exam.

** Week 6 (November 5 - November 9) - Limiting Power

November 5: Credible Commitments


November 7: Tying the King’s Hands


November 9: Constitutional Limitations


** Week 7 (November 12 - November 16): Regimes and Economic Performance

November 12: Veterans Day Holiday - no class

November 14: Political Regimes and Growth

November 16: Political Regimes and Public Policies

Week 8 (November 19 - November 23): Politics, Policies and the Economy

November 19: Government Failures

November 21: Bad Governments (Easterly, ch. 11)

November 23: Thanksgiving Holiday - no class

Week 9 (November 26 - November 30): Which Institutions for Prosperity?

November 26: Predatory Governments (Easterly, ch. 12)

November 28: Polarization and Growth (Easterly, ch. 13)

November 30: Constitutional Design

Week 10 (December 3 - December 7): Economic Prosperity and Political Institutions

December 3: Economic Prosperity and Democracy

December 5: Bringing it all together

December 7: Final Overview.

Final Exam: Wednesday December 12 - 08:00AM - 10:59AM