POLISCI 497 / INTLSTD 401
Experimental Approaches to the Political Economy of Development
Winter 2019

Prof. Noah Nathan, Department of Political Science
Mondays and Wednesdays, 10am–11:30am
Mason Hall 1339

Contact Info

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Course Description

The past two decades have seen a significant emphasis on field experimental research in the study of politics and economic development. Political scientists and economists increasingly directly intervene in the real world, randomizing the implementation of programs and policies in collaboration with governments, NGOs, and international institutions in an attempt to identify the underlying causal relationships explaining key political and economic outcomes in developing countries. This "experimental turn" has offered new answers to some core questions about the political economy of development and created opportunities for new collaborations between academics and the public and private sectors. It has also sparked controversy about both the ethics and scholarly limitations of such research.

The course surveys recent experimental research on the political economy of development. We will examine studies on corruption, electoral accountability, peace-building and ethnic conflict, the political representation of women and the poor, and the economic effects of political institutions. We will also discuss the potential pitfalls of experimental research. Readings focus on Africa, Latin America, and South and Southeast Asia.

Readings

All required readings will be posted on the Canvas webpage for the course. Please let me know if you have any problems accessing the course materials.

Assignments and Grading

- *Group presentation* (15% of final grade) – students will be divided into 7 groups of 3-4. Each group will do extra research on a special topic in the course and give a 15 minute in-class presentation in which they introduce that topic to the rest of the class. The dates for each presentation are indicated by group number below. The topics and extra readings are detailed in a separate document on the Canvas site. Group assignments will be determined during the first full week of class. Note: *each group must schedule an appointment at Office Hours for the week before their presentation date to go over their presentation plans with me in person.*

- *Short paper on course readings* (20% of final grade) – 6-8 page double-spaced paper based on the assigned course readings and lecture materials. The paper is due **Friday, March 15 by 11:59pm** in the dropbox on Canvas.

- *Final project – propose your own randomized evaluation* (30% of final grade; 5% for proposal email; 5% for in-class presentation; 20% for final submission) – each student will develop a proposal for an original impact evaluation on a development-related topic of their choosing. Detailed instructions for the assignment will be circulated later in the semester. The final project will be graded in stages. First, students will submit an annotated bibliography by email by **Monday, April 1, by 11:59pm**. The email will identify your topic and the secondary sources that you will use for background research on that topic. Second, each student will give an in-class presentations on their proposal on **April 15, April 17, or April 22**. Third, the final written proposal – 10-15 pages, double-spaced – is due **Monday, April 29 by 11:59pm** in the dropbox on Canvas.

- *Class participation* (20% of final grade) – each student is expected to attend each class and contribute actively to the discussion. Attendance will be one component of your participation grade. Repeated unexcused absences may result in receiving a 0 for your participation grade. Excused absences require documentation (doctor's note, etc). In general, you should notify me in advance about an excused absence.

- *Reading quizzes* (15% of final grade) – class discussions and activities will not work if students have not read. To incentivize reading, there will be 8 unannounced reading quizzes, conducted at the beginning of selected sessions. These quizzes will take less than 5 minutes and will be very simple if you have done the readings. I will drop each student's worst score and average together the remaining 7 for the final grade. *There are no make-ups for quizzes.* If a quiz occurs during an excused absence, I will still drop your worst score and average together the remaining quizzes for your grade (i.e., your best 6 quizzes will now be used to compute your grade). Any quiz that occurs during an unexcused absence will be scored as a 0.

Course Policies

Please see the final page of the syllabus for the remaining course policies.

Course Schedule

Part I: Introduction

1. First meeting (January 9)

Optional reading:

1. Humphreys and Weinstein, 2009, "Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development," *Annual Review of Political Science* (pgs. 367–370 only)

2. Theories of economic underdevelopment – part 1 (January 14)

Assigned reading:

1. Gallup, Sachs, and Mellinger, 1999, "Geography and Economic Development," *International Regional Science Review*. (pgs. 179–184)
2. Collier, 2007, *The Bottom Billion*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 3 (pgs. 38–49), Chapter 4 (all).

3. *Political* theories of economic underdevelopment – part 2 (January 16)

Assigned reading:

1. Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, Crown Publishers. Chapters 1 and 2.
2. Bates, 1981, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*, University of California Press. Selections: pgs. 1-7, 11-20, 30-35, 81-87, 96-105, 119-120.

January 21 – MLK Holiday. NO CLASS.

Part II: Experiments and development

4. The challenges of causal inference (January 23)

Assigned reading:

1. Gerber and Green, 2012, *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*, WW Norton & Company. Chapter 1 (pgs. 1–5 only; stop at Section 1.2)
2. Glennerster and Takavarasha, 2013, *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*, Princeton University Press. Chapter 2 (pgs. 24–35 only)

5. Why randomize? (January 28)

Assigned reading:

1. Gerber and Green, 2012, *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*, WW Norton & Company. Chapter 1 (pgs. 5–13; 15-17; Sections 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.6)
2. Dunning, 2012, *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 (pgs. 1-15 only)

Optional reading (more technical, but covers concepts in lecture):

1. Gerber and Green, 2012, *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*, WW Norton & Company. Chapter 2.

6. Locking in concepts: endogeneity, randomization, and units of analysis (January 30)

Assigned reading:

1. Glennerster and Takavarasha, 2013, *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*, Princeton University Press. Chapter 2 (pgs. 44–52), Chapter 4 (98–112).

7. Experiments and policy (February 4)

Assigned reading:

1. Parker, 2010, "The Poverty Lab," *The New Yorker*
2. Matthews, 2018, "The small study in Rwanda that could change the way the US does foreign aid," *Vox*

Part III: Do institutions matter?

8. Democracy vs. dictatorship (February 8)

Group 1 in-class presentation

Assigned reading:

1. Olken, 2010, "Direct Democracy and Local Public Goods: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia," *American Political Science Review*. Pgs. 243–252; 265–266.
2. Jones and Olken, 2005, "Do Leaders Matter? National Leadership and Growth Since World War II," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Pgs. 835–840; 843–850; 854–858; 861–862.

9. Property rights (February 11)

Group 2 in-class presentation

Assigned reading:

1. Field, 2007, "Entitled to Work: Urban Property Rights and Labor Supply in Peru," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Pgs. 1561–1578; 1597–1598.

10. Long-run effects of institutions (February 13)

Group 3 in-class presentation

Assigned reading:

1. Dell, 2010, "The persistent effects of Peru's mining mita," *Econometrica*. Pgs. 1863–1870; 1887–1894; 1899.
2. Wantchekon, Klasnja, and Novta, 2015, "Education and Human Capital Externalities: Evidence from Colonial Benin," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Pgs. 703–720; 724–729; 753–754.

Part IV: Democracy at its best? Limits on electoral accountability

11. Information constraints (February 18)

Group 4 in-class presentation

Assigned reading:

1. Ferraz and Finan, 2008, "Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effects of Brazil's Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* Pgs. 703–711; Figures III and IV; 743–744.
2. Bidwell, Casey, and Glennerster, 2016, "Debates: Voting and Expenditure Responses to Political Communication." Pgs. 1–10; 15–20; 32-33.

12. Is more information enough? (February 20)

Assigned reading:

1. Chong, De La O, Karlan, and Wantchekon, 2015, "Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification," *Journal of Politics*. Pgs. 55–61; 64; 69–70.
2. Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai, 2014, "Does Information Lead to More Active Citizenship? Evidence from an Education Intervention in Rural Kenya," *World Development*. Pgs. 69–74; 77-81. Be sure to see Figure 3.

13. Clientelism (February 25)

Group 5 in-class presentation

Assigned reading:

1. Wantchekon, 2003, "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin," *World Politics*. Pgs. 399–412; see Table 3; 421–422.

14. Cures for clientelism? (February 27)

***Short paper assignment circulated in class*

Assigned reading:

1. Bobonis, Gertler, Gonzalez-Navarro, and Nichter, 2017, "Vulnerability and Clientelism." Abstract; pgs. 1–17; 21–23; 30.
2. Hicken, Leider, Ravanilla, and Yang, 2018, "Temptation in Vote-Selling: Evidence from a Field Experiment in the Philippines," *Journal of Development Economics*. Pgs. 1-5, 9-10, 13.

SPRING BREAK (March 4, March 6)

Part V: Interlude: ethics and limits of experiments

15. The ethics of experimentation (March 11)

Assigned reading:

1. Humphreys, 2011, "Ethical Challenges of Embedded Experimentation."
2. Glennerster and Takavarasha, 2013, *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*, Princeton University Press. Chapter 2. Pgs. 60-65.

16. The critics of experimentation (March 13)

Short paper is due Friday, March 15 by 11:59pm

Assigned reading:

1. Hammer, 2017, "Randomized control trials for development? Three problems," Brookings Institution.
2. Alkire et al, 2018, "Buzzwords and tortuous impact studies won't fix a broken aid system," The Guardian.

Part VI: Corruption

17. Experimental evidence of corruption (March 18)

Group 6 in-class presentation

Assigned reading:

1. Bertrand, Djankov, Hanna, and Mullainathan, 2007, "Obtaining a Driver's License in India: An Experimental Approach to Studying Corruption," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Pgs. 1639–1653; 1655–1659; 1661–1672.

18. Monitoring corruption (March 20)

Assigned reading:

1. Olken, 2007, "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia," *Journal of Political Economy*. Pgs. 200–217; 240–244.
2. Banerjee, Glennerster, and Duflo, 2008, "Putting a Band-Aid on a Corpse: Incentives for Nurses in the Indian Public Health Care System," *Journal of the European Economic Association*. Read all.

19. Corruption in elections (March 25)

Assigned reading:

1. Ichino and Schundeln, "Deterring or Displacing Electoral Irregularities? Spillover Effects of Observers in a Randomized Field Experiment in Ghana," *Journal of Politics*. Pgs. 292–300; 305.
2. Callen and Long, 2015, "Institutional Corruption and Election Fraud: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Economic Review*. Pgs. 354–362; 365–367; 379–380.

Part VII: Women's representation and development

20. Gender quotas (March 27)

***Group 7 in-class presentation*

Assigned reading:

1. Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004, "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from an India-wide Randomized Policy Experiment," *Econometrica*. Pgs. 1409–1414; 1423–1425; 1427–1434; 1440.
2. Bhavnani, 2009, "Do Electoral Quotas Work after They are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India," *American Political Science Review*. Pgs. 23–30; 34–35.

21. Limits to gender-based interventions (April 1)

Assigned reading:

1. Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov, 2013, "Empowering Women through Development Aid: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Political Science Review*. Pgs. 540–547; 549–552; 554 (starting at "Discussion") – 556.

2. Gottlieb, 2016, "Why Might Information Exacerbate the Gender Gap in Civic Participation? Evidence from Mali," *World Development*. Pgs. 95–99; 101–105.

Class CANCELLED – April 3

Part VIII: Reducing conflict

22. Experiments on reconciliation (April 8)

Assigned reading:

1. Fearon, Humphreys, and Weinstein, 2015."How Does Development Assistance Affect Collective Action Capacity? Results from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia," *American Political Science Review*. Pgs. 450–457; 466–468.

2. Jha and Shayo, 2017, "Valuing Peace: The Effects of Financial Market Exposure on Votes and Political Attitudes." Pgs. 1–17; 29–30; 32–33.

23. Media interventions to reduce conflict (April 10)

Assigned reading:

1. Levy Paluck and Green, 2009, "Deference, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution: An Experimental Intervention Using Mass Media to Change Norms and Behavior in Rwanda," *American Political Science Review*. Pgs. 622–628; 629 ("Focus Group Results") – 638.

2. Conroy-Krutz and Moehler, 2015, "Moderation from Bias: A Field Experiment on Partisan Media in a New Democracy," *Journal of Politics*. Read all.

Part IX: Student Presentations

24. Final project presentations (part 1) (April 15)

25. Final project presentations (part 2) (April 17)

26. Final project presentations (part 3) (April 22)

******Final paper due Monday, April 29 by 11:59pm on Canvas******

Course Policies

- *Late assignments*: Late assignments will be docked 1/3rd of a grade for each 24 hours they are late (e.g., A becomes A−, B+ becomes B, etc.). Extensions are only granted if cleared with me in advance and supported by a compelling reason, for which I may request documentation. Please consult with me if you are unsure of whether you are eligible for an extension. Absent a documented last minute medical or family emergency, *I will not respond to requests for extensions submitted less than 48 hours before the due date.*

- *Accommodations for disabilities*: If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. We will work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide to me is private and confidential.

- *Student wellbeing*: University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and https://caps.umich.edu/ during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320 and https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources.

- *Academic integrity*: So we're on the record in advance in the small chance that this arises: *I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism* and will immediately report anyone suspected of it to the administration for disciplinary action. You will also automatically fail the course. Please familiarize yourself with the University's statement on plagiarism.

- *Grade grievances*: If you believe a grade you have received is unfair or in error, you will need to do the following: 1. Provide an explanation to me in writing about why you believe the grade was in error. 2. Schedule an appointment by email to meet with me in person to discuss your complaint; 3. If my response fails to address your claim of unfairness or error, you may petition the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies at the latest within the first five weeks of classes following the completion of the course. You must convey in writing the basis for the complaint, with specific evidence in support of the argument that the grade either was given in error or was unfairly determined. This formal complaint also should summarize the outcome of the initial inquiry to the course instructor, indicating which aspects are in dispute. Within three weeks of the receipt of the petition, the DUS will determine whether to convene the Undergraduate Affairs Committee, the student, and me for a formal hearing.