What this course is about
This course addresses fundamental questions about the politics and economics of the world’s developing countries: why some countries are prosperous and others are not, why some governments are democratic and others authoritarian, why some advance the rights of women and others do not, and why some are afflicted by civil war while others remain peaceful.

Teaching objectives
By the end of the course I expect students to understand the prevailing answers to the course’s central questions, and the prevailing methods used by social scientists to answer them. I also want students to appreciate why these answers are sometimes unsatisfying: sometimes because we lack the data and analytical tools to answer questions definitively; sometimes because the answers reflect hidden biases or false assumptions; and in some cases, because the answers are highly complex and vary depending on the area and period under study.

More broadly, I want students to use the course as an opportunity to refine their thinking, speaking, and writing skills. A few years ago Steven Pinker, a cognitive psychologist and linguist, stated this point well:

> Educated people should be able to express complex ideas in clear writing and speech. They should appreciate that objective knowledge is a precious commodity, and know how to distinguish vetted fact from superstition, rumor, and unexamined conventional wisdom. They should know how to reason logically and statistically, avoiding the fallacies and biases to which the untutored human mind is vulnerable. They should think causally rather than magically, and know what it takes to distinguish causation from correlation and coincidence (Pinker in The New Republic, September 4, 2014).

The teaching goals for each week – the specific things I want you to learn – will be explained as the quarter unfolds.

Course structure
I have never taught an online course, so please bear with me! Here is how it will work. I have underlined the activities below that will be the basis of your grade.
• I will post recorded lectures twice a week, in advance of each “class period” (Tuesdays and Thursdays not later than 3 pm). The lectures will be broken up into smaller recorded chunks, so you can more easily listen to them.

• At the end of each lecture, you’ll be prompted to take a short quiz to test your understanding. If you’re not sure of an answer, you can review your notes. Once you begin the exam, you’ll have 5 minutes to answer three questions, and cannot pause, so make sure you’re ready. You can also review the slides (also posted) before you take the exam. These quizzes are timed and will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

• The sections will be conducted synchronously – that is, you have to attend them in real time through Zoom. Attendance is mandatory and you’ll be graded on your participation.
  - If you are living in a time zone that makes section attendance difficult (that is, in Europe, Africa, or Asia), let me know and we’ll discuss alternatives.

• Within the sections, you’ll be divided into smaller “working groups” with 4 or 5 people each. Working groups will have group assignments that are due before each week’s section, so you will want to meet or communicate separately. Your TAs will assign you to groups, explain how they’ll work, and give you the assignments.

• There will be open-book midterms and final exams. I’m still working on this, but you will probably have 1 to 2 hours to write a short essay based on the readings and lectures.

Grading
You are welcome to take this course either for a letter grade or on a P/NP basis. Also, you can switch from a letter grade to P/NP as late as 10th week without a petition, and take multiple P/NP courses in a single quarter. So I encourage you to begin the course on a letter grade basis, and switch later to P/NP if you wish to.

You’ll see there are short quizzes after each lecture. All will be graded on a P/NP basis, and you can skip or drop three of them without penalty. They are easy to do and are designed to help you follow the lectures and stay on track.

The lecture quizzes must be completed by the end of the day (8 pm Pacific) after the lecture is posted. They’ll be timed (5 minutes to answer 3 multiple choice questions), and you have to correctly answer two out of three questions to get a ‘pass.’ You can (and should) consult your lecture notes during the exam. If you’re taking good notes, you’ll find that they’re easy.

Your TAs will explain the Working Groups and how their work will be graded.
Grades will be calculated as follows:

- Midterm: 30%
- Final Exam: 30%
- Lecture quizzes: 10%
- Working groups: 10%
- Section Participation: 20%

The midterm will be held on the Thursday of fifth week, April 30. The final exam will be on Thursday June 11 from 3 to 6 pm.

**Readings**

The course has a large reading load, the completion of which is essential to understanding the lectures. *You do not need to buy any readings:* everything, including chapters from my book, are available on the course web site.

**Lectures**

All the lectures will be posted as videos on the course website, no later than 3 pm PT on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They’ll be divided into 15-30 minute segments to make them easier to absorb.

**TAs**

We have five outstanding Teaching Assistants who will lead the sections; working with them is an integral part of the course. They are:

- Jiyoung Kim (1G, 1H, 1I): jiyoungkim12@ucla.edu
- Carolyn Steinle (1A, 1B, 1C): carolyn.steinle@gmail.com
- Naiha Manika (1O, 1P, 1Q): nmmanika@gmail.com
- Julian Michel (1J, 1K, 1M): julianmichel@ucla.edu
- Michael Simpson (1D, 1E, 1F): mocsimpson@g.ucla.edu

**Intellectual property notice**

All of the course materials that I have prepared, including the lectures, videos, slides and exams, are my property alone and protected by state common law and federal copyright law. This includes all of the video lectures, which are for your use in this course only and shall not be shared or distributed without my written consent. Students shall not sell or distribute notes, or receive remuneration for taking notes, without my written consent.

**Academic Integrity**

As a student and a member of the University community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, all work you do will be held to the highest ethical and professional standards.

Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions, or facilitating academic dishonesty. If you are unsure
of what any of these entail, please consult the university guidelines below or ask me or your TA. *If you are even suspected of violating these standards, I am obliged to refer your case immediately to the Dean of Students*, who will carry out an investigation.

Please carefully review the university guidelines regarding academic dishonesty. They are at [http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/StudentGuide.pdf](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/StudentGuide.pdf).
March 31: Introduction to the course

April 2: What is “development” and how can we study it?


April 7: Why are some world regions richer than others?


Recommended: Jared Diamond (1998), Guns, Germs, and Steel.

April 9: Where do nation-states come from?


Recommended: James C. Scott (1998), Seeing Like a State, Chapters 1 & 2

April 14: How can nation-states foster development?

Hernando de Soto (2000), The Mystery of Capital: why capitalism triumphs in the West and fails everywhere else. Chapters 2 and 3.


April 16: What is corruption and where does it come from?


Recommended: Transparency International, Global Corruption Perceptions Index 2019

April 21: Why are some states democratic?

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy


April 23: Is democracy good for development?


April 28: What are the challenges to democracy?


April 30: Midterm

May 5: How does development affect gender rights?

World Bank, World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development, Overview (pp 1-38)

Look at the World Bank’s Gender Home

May 7: Why are oil-rich countries different?

Michael Ross (2012), The Oil Curse, Chapters 1-2
May 12: How does oil wealth affect democratic rule and gender rights?
Michael Ross (2012), *The Oil Curse*, Chapters 3 and 4

May 14: Why are some countries hurt by ethnic divisions?

May 19: Can political institutions heal ethnic divisions?

May 21: What causes civil wars?
Michael Ross (2012), *The Oil Curse*, Chapter 5

May 26: How is climate change affecting development?

May 28: What can be done about climate change?

June 2: What can be done in the poorest states?

June 4: Looking back, looking ahead

**June 11: Final exam**