PL SC 597C: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY
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Course Description: Students of various social sciences disciplines such as economics, sociology, and political science have long been interested in understanding the role of geography in shaping processes as diverse as economic development, civil conflict, and social movement. Theoretically, studying the impacts of geography implies the introduction of a new dimension to the study of political and economic processes. Many new questions need to be answered, for instance, what is the relationship between geography and collective action? Does geography shape voters’ preferences? What are the mechanisms that underpin specific geographical patterns of economic development, unemployment, and inequality? Whether and how geography affects changes of ethnic conflicts? Such questions require new theoretical models and empirical methodologies, and often geo-coded data that take into account spatial interdependences. This course will lay out some conceptual and methodological foundations drawn from existing studies of political geography. We will focus on the origins of geographical patterns of development and economic growth. We will also analyze the role of geography in shaping individual preferences and incentives to engage in politics, and how such micro-level factors are aggregated to shape macro-level outcomes such as state building and civil war. We will also introduce students to some simple applications of spatial data and methodologies and related software packages that can be used to model spatial processes.

Assignments:
Two thought papers: 20% each. For each paper,
- Pick the readings for one week: there is no single right way to write a thought paper, but when you write, you might want to pay attention to the following questions: what are the key research questions/puzzles that unite these readings, for example, the role of geography and climate on institutional choices and long-term economic development? Do you agree or disagree with the main arguments and why? (You need to give some argument to support your opinion.) Here, pay attention to the underlying theoretical assumptions: some of them are explicitly discussed in the readings; some or maybe most of them are not; but do they make any sense and are they necessary? Would and how do the theoretical implications change if we relax the key assumptions? Moreover, you might want to discuss the testable implications of the theory and evaluate the quality of empirical analysis. Finally, which is where the discussion above should lead us, what is the next step in this research agenda?

For the 2 weeks that you choose to write the thought papers on, you also need to lead the discussion for the seminar. The thought papers may also serve as a place to begin to develop ideas for your own further research.

Research paper/design: 40%
- By the end of week 6, you should find a research question or puzzle related to the course topics; speak to me about it either in or after class. This part is not graded but it is very important because all good research starts with the “right” question.

1 This course syllabus borrows heavily from Pablo Beramendi and Erik Wibbels’ political geography seminar at Duke. I want to thank Erik and Pablo for permission to model after their seminar.
- By week 7, I need from you a written statement on your research question. This should be no more than one page, basically telling someone outside the subfield why this is an important and interesting question that is worth doing (5% of the final grade).
- Between week 8-11: informal class presentation of the research question, literature review, and your theory; not graded.
- By week 12, you need to turn in a literature review plus your own hypothesis(ies) on the research question; this should be no more than 4,000 words (15% of the final grade).
- By week 16, you should finish the rest of the paper or research design, that is, (how to) collecting data (quantitative and/or qualitative) and testing your hypothesis; this should be no more than 8,000 words. (20% of the final grade based on the FINAL paper/research design).

Participation: 20%
- 10% for leading the discussion.
- 10% for general participation.

Readings: I expect you to read all the required readings listed on the syllabus for a particular date before class; note that there are recommended readings for each week as well: they are not required, but might help if you are particularly interested in the topic of the week. The reading load is not light, but neither is it too heavy. Make sure you leave yourself plenty of time, and look ahead for heavy reading days. Most readings are journal articles; I will upload the PDFs to Angel. For others few readings involving book chapters, I will arrange copies to be made.

Some useful links:
- http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/dell/files/090110combined_gis_notes.pdf: Dell has these notes on GIS and economics; it was written in 2009, but still good introduction.
- http://devecondata.blogspot.com/: this is a very useful site for recent research and data sources; again, written by someone from econ …
- http://people.su.se/~mkuda/gis_lecture.html: links to good lectures/exercise for ArcGIS;

Schedule:

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

Week 1: course introduction: class cancelled thanks to APSA.

Week 2: Conceptualizing Place and Space in the Social Sciences: the Role of Proximity, Networks, and Diffusion:

Recommended:


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PART II: ORIGINS OF GEOGRAPHIC DISPARITIES

Week 3: Economic Concentration/Deconcentration and Development


Recommended:


Week 4: Cities, Urban Form, and the Role of Distance


Recommended:


**Part III: Geography and Micro-level Politics**

[We are going to discuss, informally, the topics of your research paper/design in week 5.]

**Week 5: Geography and Preferences: Self-sorting, Segregation and Preferences.**


Recommended:

Week 6: Geography and Collective Action

Recommended:
Roger V. Gould, Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune.

Week 7: Geography and Preference Aggregation: Parties and Elections
Recommended:
Wendy Schiller “ Trade politics in the American Congress: a study of the interaction of political geography and interest group behavior” Pg 18, (1999), 769-789.

PART IV: Geography and Macro Political Economy

Week 8: The Geography of State Formation

Recommended:
V.I. Lenin Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, Moscow, Foreign Language Publication House, 1947. There is link to this: http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/.

Week 9: Geography and Institutional Choices
Jeffrey Nugent and James Robinson. 2005. “Are Endowments Fate?” Working Paper, Harvard University. (The paper was published in 2010; but we don’t have access to it.)

Recommended:

Week 10: Geography and Redistribution
Beramendi, Pablo. 2008. “Political Representation and Endogenous Fiscal Institutions”. Mimeo: Department of Political Science, Duke University. There is another 2007 IO paper on similar topic:


Recommended
Alberto Diaz Cayeros et al Strategies of Vote Buying: Social Transfers, Democracy and Welfare in Mexico, book manuscript/selected chapters. This is interesting, but it is over 300 pages: http://www.stanford.edu/~magaloni/dox/2012strategiesvotebuying.pdf.


J. Chen “Are poor voters easier to buy off? A natural experiment from the 2004 Florida hurricane season” Working paper, Stanford University. I can’t find this one online; but Chen, Jowei’s work on electoral geography seems quite interesting.


Simon Nichter 2008."Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot” American Political Science Review 102, 1, 19-31. Read this one along with the one above.


Week 11: Climate, geography, institutional legacies, and economic development.


Recommended:

PART V: Geography and Conflicts

Week 12: The Geography of State Breakdown: Conflict and Civil War
Kristin Bakke and Erik Wibbels “Regional Inequality, Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Federal States” World Politics (October 2006): 1-50.

Recommended:
Week 13: The New Disaggregated Approach of Conflict Studies


Jacob N. Shapiro, and Nils B. Weidmann. Is the Phone Mightier than the Sword? Cell Phones and Insurgent Violence in Iraq. Forthcoming in International Organization.


Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou. 2013. The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa. NBER w17620.


Recommended:


Week 14-15: project presentations and/or Introduction to GIS Workshop.