Doing Political Economy  
POL-UA 842-001  
Spring 2022  
Wednesday 4:55-7:25 pm  
TBD

Instructor: Sukwon Lee (sl2647@nyu.edu)  
Office: TBD  
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description: This course covers the major concepts and approaches within the field of political economy. Political economy is a field of inquiry that has made great strides in recent years in explaining political and economic behavior by characterizing the incentives of actors and the context in which these actors make decisions and influence outcomes. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to these theoretical approaches and show how they can be used to address contemporary policy questions.

This course is structured to highlight the intersection between politics and economics, and how political issues (in particular political institutions) affect economic issues such as domestic spending and debt, taxes and international trade. Throughout we will be concerned with how domestic political institutions affect outcomes as varied as corruption, democratization, trade policy, and war.

The readings for each class consist of two or three journal articles or book chapters. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. The readings for the course are aimed at undergraduate students who lack an extensive knowledge of statistics and game theory. There are a few readings on the syllabus that employ sophisticated formal models and statistical methods; however these types of readings are kept to a minimum.

I assume no background knowledge of economics. Please note that some lectures will require knowledge of a little math (but nothing beyond high school algebra).

Course Requirements and Grading: The requirements for this course include four homework assignments and two examinations (a midterm and final). The midterm and the final examinations will be distributed on Friday, Mar 26th, and the due date is on Mar 29th by 6:00pm EST. The final will be distributed on Friday, May 7th, and the due date is on May 14th by 6:00pm EST. No late submission will be accepted. Written assignments must be your own work and submitted at the beginning of the class in which they are due (MS-WORD or PDF) to my email. Attendance at class is both recommended and required. In my experience, attendance has been a good predictor of students’ performance on exams. In addition, poor attendance will affect your participation grade (it is difficult to participate in class if you are not there).

Your final grade for this course is based on the following:
Class Attendance and Participation – 10%
Written Assignments – 20%
Midterm Exam – 35%
Final Exam – 35%

Late assignments will be penalized for each day they are late.

Course Policies: Cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must comply with the New York University policy on academic integrity, which can be found online at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity.

In the interest of fairness, make-ups to examinations will only be possible in the most extenuating of circumstances. If you are ill or have a university-accepted excuse, you must notify me prior to the exam. You will need to bring in supporting documentation to be granted a make-up exam. After you provide this information and evidence, a decision will be made regarding a make-up.

Students who require disability-related accommodations are encouraged to contact the Moses Center. Please submit your approval letter to me as soon as possible to ensure the successful implementation of any requisite accommodations.

Readings: There is only one required book for this course. Almost all other readings are posted online on the “NYU Classes” website. The required book is:


Schedule: The following schedule is tentative. If it takes more or less than the allotted time for a particular topic, we will adjust accordingly

Course Introduction

January 26 What is Political Economy? What is Social Science Theory?


A Review of the Rational Choice Approach

January 26 Rationality, Preferences, and Strategies

February 2  Simultaneous Move Games, Extensive Form Games and Expected Utility

February 9  Preference Aggregation/ Collective Action, Public Goods, and Common Pool Resources

Domestic Politics and Comparative Political Economy

February 16  Formation of the State/ Selectorate Theory
- *The Dictator’s Handbook* (Chapters 1-3)

February 23  Selectorate Theory continued/ Tax Rates, Domestic Spending, Debt, and Corruption
- *The Dictator’s Handbook* (Chapters 1-6)

March 2  Foreign Aid/ Development and Democratization
- *The Dictator’s Handbook* (Chapters 7)
March 9  Resource Curse, Revolutionary Threats, and Democratization/ Comparative Advantage and Trade

- The Dictator’s Handbook (Chapter 8)

March 16  No Class – Spring Break

March 23  Comparative Advantage and Trade

****** Receive Take Home Midterm******

****** Midterm Deadline is March 26th, by 6:00pm EST******
Email to sl2647@nyu.edu

March 30  Domestic Political Economy of Protectionism


April 6  Political Institutions and Rent-seeking/ International Cooperation: Why Do States Cooperate?


International Relations: Cooperation and War

April 13  International Cooperation: Enforcement and Compliance/ Domestic Politics and International Cooperation


**April 20**  
War and International Interventions/Review  
- *The Dictator’s Handbook* (Chapter 9)  

**April 27**  
War and International Interventions/Review

**May 4**  
What is democracy and why is so important?

****** Receive Take Home Final******

****** Final Deadline is May 11th, by 6:00pm EST******
Email to sl2647@nyu.edu