

**The ECONOMIC and POLITICAL
PERFORMANCE of CIVILIZATIONS**
Duke University
Economics 351S, Political Science 327S

Fall 2016

Timur Kuran

Classes: Wednesday, 8:45 – 11:15, Keohane Quad 4D

Offices: 234 Social Sciences Building and 215 Gross Hall

Office hours: Wednesday 1:30 - 3:30 (*Gross office through week 7, SS office after that*)

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Objectives

This course offers a critical survey of theories concerning the economic and political performance of major civilizations. The emphasis is on the metrics used to measure performance, and especially on the causes of differences that took shape and persisted over long time periods. The theories that we shall cover address the roles of institutions, cultures, legal systems, beliefs, family structures, class structure, religions, technologies, geography, and natural resources. Interactions between economic and political development will also constitute a core theme.

The course will familiarize students with the institutions that have determined the pace and characteristics of economic and political development in various civilizations. It will examine certain institutional transformations and selected cases of institutional stagnation to derive lessons about the mechanisms that govern development in general, including democratization and economic modernization. As such, the course will provide insights applicable to all regions of the world, both in the past and in the present.

The course is organized around topics that present focused intellectual puzzles, including ones that have preoccupied scholars for generations. Within each topic the goal is to learn not just what happened but also, and more important, why economic and political history unfolded as it did. In other words, the emphasis is on analysis rather than description.

Class sessions

The class will meet once a week for two back-to-back sessions separated by a 10-minute break. Regular attendance is essential to success in the course. Because there is no main textbook, only by attending class regularly will you be able to master the topics to be discussed and grasp the connections between readings. In any case, class presentations will go beyond the readings, and they will contain ideas unavailable through published sources. By the same token, keeping up with the readings is essential to following discussions.

Audiotaping or videotaping of the class sessions is not allowed.

Tests

Requirements include four hour-long in-class tests [September 28, October 19, November 9, December 7], and a research paper due on April 27.

The first three tests will take place during the first hour of the class period (8:45-9:45). Each will include two questions, one involving material already discussed, and the other about the readings scheduled to be discussed that day. The last test will take place during the final hour of our last class period (10:15-11:15).

Students are encouraged to type their answers through Sakai, using a laptop. Handwritten answers in blue books will be accepted as an alternative.

Taking the tests is mandatory. The time of the tests cannot be moved for anyone, except in the event of a *documented* grave emergency (e.g., death in the family, hospitalization, illness requiring immediate attention of a physician). Unacceptable excuses for missing a test include: malfunctioning automobile, temperamental alarm clock, non-refundable airline ticket, social event, and uncooperative weather.

Special arrangements may be made for disabled students working through Disabilities Services (668-1267).

Grading

All written work will be graded for analytical sophistication, originality, accuracy, coherence, clarity, and comprehensiveness. In the tests no credit will be given for repeating a question, and penalties will be imposed for invoking facts or theories irrelevant to the question at hand. Requests for regrading will be accepted only if accompanied by a *clear* and *written* justification for the request. Regrading will not be limited to the specific question whose scoring is being challenged. The entire exam will be regraded, and the exam score may go up or down.

The course grade will be based on a weighted average of three best tests (the lowest grade will be dropped), paper, and class performance: 15% for each of the three best tests + 35% for research paper + 20% for class performance.

Readings

The selected readings consist of journal articles, book chapters, and books. Ten books, to be covered in part or in full, are available for purchase at the Textbook Store. Other books are on 1-day reserve at Perkins. Articles are posted on Sakai.

Authors of the readings include not only political scientists and economists but also legal scholars, and historians. The readings have been selected to familiarize you with substantive controversies, but also to expose you to various research techniques used to study the past: (1) archival data collection, (2) empirical testing, (3) textual criticism, and especially (4) institutional analysis.

Certain readings will address politically controversial and socially sensitive issues from multiple angles. Within the time constraints of the course, you will gain exposure to competing perspectives through influential writings of their leading exponents.

The required readings are starred. The rest are recommended. Depending on student interest, minor adjustments may be made to this reading list.

Paper requirement

Each student will write a 5000 to 6250-word paper (20-25 pages in 12 pt. font) analyzing comparatively the development of two civilizations in one carefully specified and appropriately narrow dimension. The development of the topic itself will be tied to the readings, and the student will be expected, as part of the project, to evaluate critically at least two theories (or classes of theories) considered in depth in the course. A paper proposal will be due by week 7, a partial draft by week 10, and the full paper at the end of reading period. Students are expected to share their findings as part of the course discussions.

KEY DEADLINES

October 12, 11:00 PM: 2-page proposal in MS word due in Sakai Dropbox
November 2, 11:00 PM: 1250-1500 word draft in MS word due in Sakai Dropbox
December 11, 4:30 PM: *Hard copy* of final paper due in my Econ or Political Science mailbox,
along with an MS word copy in Sakai Dropbox

Except in case of documented grave emergency, missing a deadline will result in a grading penalty, which will be proportionate to the length of the delay.

Course outline

L: On reserve at Perkins Library • *****: Required reading • **T:** Available at Textbook Store

1. The STUDY of CIVILIZATIONS (August 31)

* Timur Kuran, “Explaining the Economic Trajectories of Civilizations: The Systemic Approach.”
Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, 71 (2009): 593-605.

L Avner Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade*
(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chaps. 1-3.

2. GEOGRAPHY and the ENVIRONMENT (September 7)

T *Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), prologue + chaps. 1-10.

3. RESOURCES (September 14)

T * Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chaps. 1, 2, 4, 6.

4. INSTITUTIONS (September 21)

T* Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), chaps. 1-8.

L E. L. Jones, *Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History*, 2nd ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000, Introduction + chaps. 5-8, 11.

*Jean-Philippe Platteau, *Institutions, Social Norms, and Economic Development* (Amsterdam: Harwood, chaps. 4-5).

5. INSTITUTIONS (September 28, with first one-hour test)

* North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, chaps. 9-13.

T* Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chap. 1, 2, 4.

*Timur Kuran and Jared Rubin, “The Financial Power of the Powerless: Socio-Economic Status and Interest Rates under Partial Rule of Law,” *Economic Journal*, 127 (in press), section 2 and appendices optional).

6. INSTITUTIONS of the PRIVATE ECONOMY (October 5)

T* Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), chaps. 1-8.

7. INSTITUTIONS of the PRIVATE ECONOMY (October 12)

* Kuran, *Long Divergence*, chaps. 9-12.

Daniel Klerman, "The Emergence of English Commercial Law: Analysis Inspired by the Ottoman Experience." *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 71 (2009): 683-46.

October 12: Research paper proposal due at 11:00 PM (place in Sakai Dropbox)
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8. CIVIC CULTURE (October 19, with second one-hour test)

T * Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chaps. 1, 3-6.

9. CIVIC CULTURE (October 26)

T* Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, Free Press, 1996), chaps. 1-8, 10-11, 18-19, 22.

10. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS (November 2)

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review*, 91 (2001): 1369-1401.

***T** Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), chaps. 1, 3, 5-8.

November 2: Organizational draft of paper due at 11:00 PM (post to Sakai Dropbox)

11. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS (November 9, with third one-hour test)

*Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chaps. 9-12.

Eliana Balla and Noel D. Johnson, "Fiscal Crisis and Institutional Change in the Ottoman Empire and France." *Journal of Economic History*, 69 (2009): 809-45.

* **T** Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), chaps. 1-2.

12. CLASS STRUCTURE (TBA)

* T Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, chaps. 7-12.

13. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS (TBA)

* Philip T. Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), chaps. 1-5, 7.

14. TECHNOLOGY (December 7, with last one-hour test, 10:15-11:15)

T *Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), chaps. 1, 6-10.

December 11: Final draft of research paper due at 4:30 PM in Sakai Dropbox (12 pt. Times Roman font in MS word, pages numbered) **and** as hardcopy in mailbox at Economics or Political Science). These offices close at 5:00 PM.
