



Research  
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Outreach

CCA

# Political Economy of (Under)Development: New (GIS) Tools for Applied Research

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## Instructors

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### Description and Program:

This course has 2 purposes. First, it provides Ph.D. students with an overview of the thriving literature on the political economy of growth and development. Second, it equips students with an increasingly essential research tool in this field: spatial data and GIS. The course is thus divided in two parts:

- Political Economy of (Under)Development - first 15 hours - provides an overview of the dynamic research exploring growth and development at the intersection of development, political economy, and economic history. Simultaneously, the course aims to guide Ph.D. students in identifying frontier research questions within the discipline. We'll engage in brainstorming sessions to explore innovative current research agenda, selecting promising research questions, data collection strategies, and other essential elements to enhance your research experience during your Ph.D. The course could be intriguing for Ph.D. students working in other fields as well beyond development economics and growth.

We will review some of the major contributions in the literature on the political economy of (under)development, following the guiding thread of questions such as "What constitutes a promising research question?" and "How can one determine if a project is worth the investment of time?"

The first four sessions (each lasting 3 hours) will be structured around the following topics:

1. Data Collections that Open Doors. How can innovative data collection open venues for new research. We will explore various papers, including: Michalopoulos & Xue (2021)\*, and Iaria et al. (2022)\*.
2. New Identification Strategies for Long-standing Ideas and Questions. We will study Bazzi et al. (2020)\* and Alsan & Wanamaker (2018)\*. To get more informal insights into a paper's story we will also briefly review Saia (2018) and Esposito (2022).
3. Changing Priors. We will study Carlana (2019)\* and Bursztyn et al. (2020)\*.

4. Research Policy Implications. We will study Berman et al. (2017)\* and others.

The final lecture will be dedicated to students' presentations (see Assessment, below).

• GIS for Applied Economic Research - last 15 hours - aims to provide Ph.D. students with fundamental theoretical and practical knowledge of spatial data and GIS, exploring their applications within economics. While the primary focus will be on literature concerning development and growth, these tools are extensively utilized by applied economists across various domains. Topics covered in class will include:

- o Map projections and their uses
- o Georeferencing paper maps
- o Spatially Relating Different Datasets to Each Other
- o Remote Sensing and AI
- o Computing distances
- o Topography and Hydrology
- o Spatial Statistics

**Objectives:**

At the end of this course students will get exposure to some of the most important debates in the literature at the border between development economics and political economy of development. Moreover, they will develop familiarity with a spatial data and GIS tools for applied economic researcher.

**Assignments and Assessment:**

Students' assessment will be based on:

- Political Economy of (Under)Development

o Assignments: Students are invited to read (at least) the introduction of the papers that will be discussed during each session (an average of 2 papers per session, I will put an asterisk on the ones I expect you to read).

o Assessment: In-class presentation of a Research Grant Proposal. Students will be required to formulate a research grant proposal and structure it in a presentation format to be delivered within the new Behavioral Development Unit at Collegio Carlo Alberto. The topic of the proposal will center on nutrition, health, gender

and social norms. Students who develop proposals that the unit deems competitive for international grants will be encouraged to further develop their research grant within the unit and submit it for international grants (of course, students can also opt for developing their research idea independently.)

- GIS for Applied Economic Research

o Take-Home Assignments. Each GIS section will include a take-home exercise to reinforce what was learned in class, due the following week.

## References

- M. Alsan & M. Wanamaker (2018). 'Tuskegee and the health of black men'. *The quarterly journal of economics* 133(1):407 455.
- S. Bazzi, et al. (2020). 'Frontier culture: The roots and persistence of rugged individualism in the United States'. *Econometrica* 88(6):2329 2368.
- N. Berman, et al. (2017). 'This mine is mine! How minerals fuel conflicts in Africa'. *American Economic Review* 107(6):1564 1610.
- L. Bursztyn, et al. (2020). 'Misperceived social norms: Women working outside the home in Saudi Arabia'. *American economic review* 110(10):2997 3029.
- M. Carlana (2019). 'Implicit stereotypes: Evidence from teachers' gender bias'. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134(3):1163 1224.
- E. Esposito (2022). 'The side effects of immunity: Malaria and African slavery in the United States'. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 14(3):290 328.
- A. Iaria, et al. (2022). 'Gender gaps in academia: Global evidence over the twentieth century'. Available at SSRN 4150221 .
- S. Michalopoulos & M. M. Xue (2021). 'Folklore'. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136(4):1993 2046.
- A. Saia (2018). 'Random interactions in the Chamber: Legislators' behavior and political distance'. *Journal of Public Economics* 164:225 240.