

Economics 315-0-30
Ralf Meisenzahl

Econ Hist Growth Development
Department of Economics

Northwestern University
Spring 2020

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Class meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6.30-8pm online

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-6:00 online, and also at other times by appointment.

Readings: Web notes: <http://www.ralfmeisenzahl.com/teaching.html>

Recommended Background Reading: Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) Why Nations Fail.

This disclaimer will always be on slide 1 of my class:

"This class or portions of this class will be recorded by the instructor for educational purposes. These recordings will be shared only with students enrolled in the course and will be deleted at the end of the Spring Quarter."

Recording Policy:

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Some important dates:

Thursday, April 16, 6.30pm CST: **First Assignment due**

Tuesday, April 28, 6.30pm CST: **Second Assignment due**

Friday, May 8, 5pm CST: **Term paper topic proposed and accepted**

Tuesday May 19, 6.30pm CST: **Third Assignment due**

Friday, May 29: [Drop Deadline](#)

Thursday, June 4, 6.30pm CST: **Term paper due**

I’ve not taught this class before, so I don’t have a good idea of how long it will take to cover various topics. The outline below is therefore subject to change.

April 7 – Introduction to Institutions and Development / State Formation

April 9 - Informal Institutions and the Rise of Long-Distance Trade

April 14 – Path Dependency

April 16 – Property Rights

April 21 – European Institutions before the Industrial Revolution

April 23 – Case Study: Weak Property Rights and the Rise of Mafia

April 28 – Institutional Change – Public Health Crisis

April 30 – Extractive vs Inclusive Institutions

May 5 - Case Study: Mining Mita - an Extractive Institution in Peru

May 7 – Long-run Effects of Informal Institutions: Lack of Trust

May 12 – Land Distribution: Incentives and Growth

May 14 – International Perspective on Law and Development

May 19 - Institutions and Human Capital

May 21 - The Market for Science

May 26 - China: Early Development and Divergence from Europe

May 28 - China: 1900s until today

June 2 - Case Study: The Rapid Catch-up of South Korea

June 4 - TBA

Learning Objectives: We will learn how to approach these questions: What are institutions and how they determine growth historically? Why are institutions persistent? What is the long-run impact of institutions? What do historical experiences teach us about today's institutions and institutional change?

| Grading | Share of Class Grade |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| First Assignment | 15% |
| Second Assignment | 15% |
| Third Assignment | 15% |
| Term Paper | 55% |

The following are questions that many of you will have about the class.

Q: Is there a TA section on Fridays?

A: Sort of. When necessary the TA will cover important background concepts and review econometric techniques that will help you understand the reading materials.

Q: What are the basic work expectations for the class?

A: I hope that you will do about one hours of study for every hour of lecture, and that you will get read the assigned material. Ideally, I would like you to think about what institutions you are currently facing in every day economic transactions.

Q: What is your electronics communication policy?

A: **(1)** I expect you to have your preferred e-mail address entered into Canvas so that I can send messages to the class, and I expect you to check that e-mail on a daily basis. **(2)** Silence your cell phone for the duration of the class and put it away where you won't be tempted to look at it.

Q: Is it OK if I surf the web and watch crazy videos whenever your lectures get too boring?

A: Sorry, no. Put your phones away. You can take notes on your computer or tablet during lecture, but keep in mind that the temptation to look at distractions online during class is [likely to diminish your learning in lecture](#), and worse still, people who are web surfing distract the people around them, creating a negative externality.

Q: What happens if I fall suddenly ill and am unable to make it to a test?

A: If you do not reach me or leave a message on my e-mail (ralf.meisenzahl@chi.frb.org), your misfortune will be doubled. You will get a zero on the test for a grade of F that cannot be made up. Any problem that causes you to be physically unable to take a test must be carefully documented by an independent source who can confirm that you were incapacitated.

Q: Can I expect any leniency if I'm caught cheating or engaging in any unethical behavior?

A: No. Weinberg's policy is that students who are suspected of cheating are reported *immediately*.

Q: The lecture is running a few minutes over, what should I do?

A: Stay put and observe a rare occurrence.

Q: What if I have concerns about accessibility for this class?

A: Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu, 847-467-5530) and the instructor, as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

Q: What is the most important thing?

A: Please be assured that I want students to learn and to receive the good grades they deserve. So please make an appointment with me should you have undue difficulty with your work in the course.

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