

Politics of the Global South

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO - POLSCI 3220F

Fall 2025

Professor: Sebastián Vallejo Vera, PhD

Office: SSC 7221

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 2:00 PM to 3:15 PM

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Class Time: Tuesdays from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

Class: UC-1105

Course Description

The course focuses on three areas: democracy, development, and society. We will approach these three broad topics using a comparative lens (i.e., Why are some countries more democratic than others? Why are "developed" countries more democratic than "developing" countries?). We will also study how institutions and historical political processes affect these three areas. The ultimate goal of this class is for you to critically engage with new concepts and material in a comparative perspective.

Class Format and Attendance

All classes will be held on Tuesdays from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM. **While highly encouraged, attendance is not mandatory.**¹ I understand that the current state of things has overburdened some (most... all?) of you (us) with responsibilities, stress, and barriers that were not there four years ago. Keeping this in mind, all lecture slides will be made available to students.

Class Expectations

1. **Always be respectful and mindful of your classmates.**
2. The class starts at 3:30 PM. It is as (un)convenient for you as it is for me. Please, be on time and awake, or somewhat awake, or faking being awake.
3. I will start the class at 3:30 PM with whoever is in the room. Arriving late? No problem. Just enter discreetly and quietly, take your seat, and we are all good. 3:45 PM is not the time to greet, chat, wave vigorously to your friends in the room. When you do this, you distract those that were on time and you distract me (it is also disrespectful, see point 1).
4. If you are going to be taking notes in your laptop/iPad, close all other tabs that might distract you from the lecture. The secret is to hang on to my every word.

¹ The excused absence policy required by the University gives a set of reasons why you could have an excused absence. For this class, you just need to let me know you couldn't make it, and we are all good. It is not as if we are just exiting a global pandemic and experiencing a continuous cycle of economic crises and bearing witness of the slow demise of the democratic world in the late stages of corporate capitalism...

5. I cannot make you pay attention and participate. But I can ask you to avoid distracting the rest of the class. Remember: I already know the material. The important part is for you to learn it.
6. If you are going to be watching TikTok during class anyways, at least drop the links to the really funny ones in the class forum.
7. I do not care if you are wearing pajamas, but please come to class. Worst case scenario, the material presence of your being might allow you to learn through osmosis.

A quick yet important note on cellphones: Our class is 120 minutes long. Most things in life can wait two hours to be resolved/answered/liked/swiped-right/retweeted/watched/poked/high-fived/instagramed/swiped-left/live-streamed. There is no need for you to have your cellphone out and about (yes, I notice when you are in your phone even when you try to hide it under your desk). If, for some reason, you need to have your cellphone out, please let me know before class (you know, as a courtesy).

Children in Class

I applaud all of you who go to school with children! It is difficult to balance academic, work, and family commitments, and I want you to succeed. Here are my policies regarding children in class:

1. All breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as needed. If your baby requires your attention, you can step outside and tend to them.
2. Non-nursing babies and older children are welcome as well. As a parent of two school-age children, I understand that babysitters fall through, partners have conflicting schedules, children get sick, and other issues like a global pandemic arise that leave parents with few other options. If your child requires your attention, you can step outside and tend to them.
3. All students are expected to join me in creating a welcoming environment that is respectful of your classmates who bring children to class.

I understand that sleep deprivation and exhaustion are among the most difficult aspects of parenting young children. The struggle of balancing school, work, childcare, and high inflation is tiring, and I will do my best to accommodate any such issues while maintaining the same high expectations for all students enrolled in the class. ***Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.***

Late Work Policy

Here's a real-life secret for you: legally defined adults are late with things ALL THE TIME. (Surely this isn't a secret for you, who have waited for a "soon" from your teacher to correct that essay or respond to an email... And yes, I shamelessly include myself in that group).

That said, deadlines serve their purpose. They can create an external structure to help you plan your workload and prevent everything from piling up on you. Furthermore, we live (and learn) in a community. If many of you turn in your work late, it makes planning the material we need to cover more challenging for me.

In this class, there are two types of deadlines: 1) the fatal ones, which are deadlines that cannot be postponed, and 2) the non-fatal ones, which are suggestions and planning guides (rather than arbitrary and punitive dates meant to generate anxiety). The fatal deadlines are those that are immovable for practical reasons. For example, any work submitted to me after the deadline I must submit grades will not be considered because, well, I will have already submitted grades. Similarly, due to their nature, the Final Exam and the final submission of the Major Project must be submitted within the agreed-upon times.

The non-fatal deadlines are more flexible. While I strongly recommend that you keep up with the class schedule, I also acknowledge that things happen (e.g., global pandemics, climate crises, life events). Since I don't want your assignments to pile up and I also don't want you to feel like you must disappear if you submit something late, for the rest of the deadlines (e.g., Readings), I have adopted a more "liberal" policy regarding extensions. The only thing I ask is that you proactively communicate with me to find solutions for any delays that will allow you to successfully complete the course. Note that, even if there is no penalty for late submission, if fall behind on the readings, you lose important context during the lecture. Finally, remember that I also have a life outside the classroom, and it is partly scheduled around important course dates. If you submit an assignment late, there's a good chance it will take me longer to return it corrected.

Office Hours

Please watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/270014784>

Many students often think that office hours are the time I *should not* be disturbed, which is the exact **opposite** of what they are for. Office hours are set times dedicated to all of you. I will be waiting for you to come by my office with whatever questions you have. Given the current state of the world, office hours are also the times I will definitely be available for a Zoom call or call across any other medium. This is the best and easiest way to find me outside of class and the best chance for discussing class material and concerns. Or concerns about school. Or life. Please call!

Outside of regularly scheduled office hours, you can always send me an email and make an appointment with me on some other time. College can be difficult. **Do not suffer in silence!** Come talk to me!

Readings

The main external platform we will use in this class is Perusall (www.perusall.com). Perusall is a free collaborative annotation tool that allows you to analyze texts collaboratively. All the required texts for the class, the most important supplementary readings, and the dates on which you should have them completed, are available on Perusall. Part of your grade will be calculated based on the annotations and comments you make on Perusall. Perusall is automatically integrated to Brightspace (see **Content**).

How does Perusall work?

Once you access the course page on Perusall, you can click on the "Getting Started" tab (upper left corner) to better understand how Perusall works.

In summary, Perusall is a collaborative tool for reading, commenting, and annotating texts. Imagine Facebook, but all the posts are the class readings. Collaboration allows you to get the help you need while also starting discussions and debates about the covered material. For example, if you have a question or some information to share about a passage in the reading, highlight the text and write your comment (as an annotation). You can also respond to your classmates' annotations in real time and upvote questions or comments that you find relevant. Good annotations contribute to the class by stimulating debates, explaining your analytical process, helping others, and highlighting key points. Beyond that, it allows me, as the instructor, to see what you understand from the readings, which elements generate the most interest, what questions arise from the reading, and how you are analyzing the texts.

Your careful reading and comments will be graded (by the platform itself). The elements that will be graded include:

- Your thoughtful contribution of questions and comments to the class discussion.
- Starting the reading on time.
- Reading in parts (instead of trying to read everything in one go).
- Completing the entire reading.
- Making questions and comments that elicit responses from your classmates.
- Answering questions from other classmates.

A complete guide on how to achieve a good grade on Perusall can be found in the following document:
<https://perusall.com/downloads/scoring-examples.pdf>.

Course Requirements

Final Exam (30pts): There is one final exam worth *30pts*. The exam will be taken in class.

Tackling Big Questions (25pts): You will work in (random) teams of five, answering *big questions* about the week's topic. You will present your answer to the class and respond to further questions from your classmates (and your professor).² We will carry out this exercise five times during the semester, each worth *5pts*, and you will be graded as a group. Thus, I hold final decision-making authority as to who answers a specific question (it is ok to not know the answer, though). Each group will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Does the group use the material from lectures and readings to inform their answer? (2pts)
2. Does the group supplement their answers with examples from the Global South? (1pt)
3. Does the group demonstrate an adequate understanding of the concept? (1pt)
4. Did the group answer provide reasonable answers to further questions from classmates and the professor? (1pt)

Readings and annotations (15pts): Reading and annotating the material through *Perusall* is required and will be graded. The combined score for the semester is worth *20pts*.

Major Project (30pts):³ For the final project, you are tasked with teaching a concept or idea learned in class to a broad audience, or “outsiders.” You can use any medium you want, except for a standard essay, and no tweet (X) threads. Be as creative as you want! Some ideas include: record a podcast, create a photo exhibit, write a long-form blog post or magazine piece, create a graphic novel, write a set of poems, make a diorama, or create a political cartoon. The world is your oyster! Regardless of medium, all projects will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Demonstrates a *clear* understanding of the concept (10 points)
2. Makes clear why the concept is important for the politics of the Global South (5 points)
3. Uses language that is accessible to a broad audience (5 points)
4. Demonstrates effort commensurate with a final class project (5 points)
5. Creativity and imaginative thinking (5 points)

Class participation: Class participation means that you are fully present during lectures and other class activities. Take advantage of the forum that is given to you to share, critique, and develop your ideas. However, class participation will NOT be graded.

² I suggest you take notes of these answers (and questions). Something tells me they might be included in the final exam.

³ I borrowed this idea from [Prof. Hakeem Jefferson](#).

Gradings and Important Dates

Final Exam	30%	due date: December 11th – 22nd
Tackling Big Questions	25%	due date: In class, throughout semester
Major Project	30%	due date: December 2nd
<u>Annotated Readings</u>	<u>15%</u>	
Total	100%	

A Final Note

The ultimate goal of this class is for you to critically engage with new concepts and material in a comparative perspective. With any luck, both the substance of the course, as well as the way we approach the material, will serve to enrich your professional and academic lives. I believe that the best way to achieve is as a learning *community*, rather than as a punitive panopticon. Thus, there is much flexibility in due dates and participation. Do not confuse this with an “easy class.” The class is not easy. However, I believe that you are in a stage of your academic careers (and lives) where discipline and motivation can be self-imposed. I trust that this will be the case.

Prerequisite(s)

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course, and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Non-medical and medical accommodation

Besides the Final Exam, all work can be submitted online. In the case of a non-medical absence during the Final Exam, the student can contact me and take the Exam in my office the following Monday at 9:30 AM. Further information is found in the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>).

If documentation is required for either medical or non-medical academic accommodation, then such documentation must be submitted directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor. Only the Dean's office can determine if accommodation is warranted.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Part I: Introduction

Week 1 (Sept. 9): Introduction to the course: What is the Global South world?

- Define the scope of the course.
- Review the structure and requirements of the course.
- Compare our area of study to the “developed” world.
- Why study the developing world?

Readings:

Handelman (2011). *The Challenge of Third World Development*. Pearson. Chapter 1: 1-16.
Calvert and Calvert (2019). *Politics and Society in the Developing World*. Pearson. Chapter 1: 1-64. (Optional)

Week 2 (Sept. 16): Overview: Democracy, dictatorship, and institutions

- Defining concepts: democracy, dictatorship, and institutions.
- Broad comparison in terms of democracy, dictatorship, and institutions.

Readings:

Samuels (2013). *Comparative Politics*. Pearson. Chapter 3: 59-65.
Samuels (2013). *Comparative Politics*. Pearson. Chapter 3: 91-114.

Week 3 (Sept. 23): Theories of development

- Modernization.
- Dependency theory.
- The radical tradition.

Readings:

Handelman (2011). *The Challenge of Third World Development*. Pearson. Chapter 1: 16-26.
Munck (2021). *Rethinking Development Marxist Perspectives*. Palgrave. Chapter 1: 8-14.

Week 5 (Oct. 7): Why are some countries rich and some countries poor?

- Institutions and economic development.

Readings:

Acemoglu and Robinson (2012). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power Prosperity, and Poverty*. Profile Books. Chapter 3: 70-95.

Part II: Democracy and dictatorship in the developing world

Week 6 (Oct. 14): Democracy and democratization

- What is democracy?
- When do countries democratize?

- When do/did developing countries democratized?

Readings:

Handelman (2011). *The Challenge of Third World Development*. Pearson. Chapter 2: 27-55.
 Calvert and Calvert (2019). *Politics and Society in the Developing World*. Pearson. Chapter 8: 357-373. (Optional)

Week 7 (Oct. 21): Dictatorship and democratic backsliding

- What is dictatorship?
- When do democracies break down / backslide?
- When do/did developing countries transition to autocracies / backslide?

Readings:

Calvert and Calvert (2019). *Politics and Society in the Developing World*. Pearson. Chapter 8: 337-357.
 Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018). *How Democracies Die*. Crown. Introduction: 8-23. (Optional)

Week 9 (Oct. 28): Democracy and the quality of democracy: The Latin American experience

- The history of democratization in Latin America
- Democratic backsliding and regime change in Latin America

Readings:

Munck and Luna (2023). *Latin American Politics and Society. A Comparative and Historical Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5: 469-560.

Part III: Developing countries, institutions, and society

READING WEEK (Week 10): Time to catch up!

Week 11 (Nov. 11): Political institutions in the developing world I

- Systems of government in the developing world
- Systems of government and regime stability

Readings:

Calvert and Calvert (2019). *Politics and Society in the Developing World*. Pearson. Chapter 7: 299-333.

Week 12 (Nov. 18): Political institutions in the developing world II

- Electoral systems, electoral strategies, and elections
- Party systems and parties in the developing world

Readings:

Munck and Luna (2023). *Latin American Politics and Society. A Comparative and Historical Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7: 680-769. (Optional)

Week 13 (Nov. 25): Racial identity, ethnicity, and politics (in the developing world)

- What is racial identity? What is ethnicity?
- Ethnicity and conflict in the (developing) world.
- Racial identity and racist structures in the (developing) world.

Readings:

Handelman (2011). *The Challenge of Third World Development*. Pearson. Chapter 4: 94-130.
Golash-Boza and Bonilla (2013). "Rethinking race, racism, identity and ideology in Latin America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 10: 1485-1489. (Optional)

Week 14 (Dec. 2): Gender and politics (in the developing world)

- How do we understand gender in a political context?
- The role of gender in the developing world.
- **Submission of Major Project due!**

Readings:

Handelman (2011). *The Challenge of Third World Development*. Pearson. Chapter 5: 133-163.
Htun (2004). "Is Gender like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups," *Perspective on Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3: 439-458. (Optional)

Week 15 (Dec. 9): Special topic / project showcase

- (We might be a bit behind at this point. We will use this week to catch up).
- During this week, we will cover a topic proposed by the class.
- During this week, we will showcase the **Major Projects**.

Readings:

(Good week to catch-up on any missing readings)