

# The Political Economy of Development in Rural India (PS 243E)

## Syllabus for Winter 2013

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Office Hours: Friday 2-4pm, or by appointment

Seminar time: MW 1:15-3:05pm

Seminar location: Littlefield 103

## Objectives

When and why do agriculturalists accept, manipulate, or overthrow the pre-existing distribution of political, economic and social power?

This course will help students utilize political economy theories and methods of analysis to understand the institutional dynamics of change in rural India. Students should expect to achieve three goals as a result of this course. First, the class will provide students with a deeper understanding of the nature of change in a particularly dynamic, varied and influential state with a mainly-rural population: India. Second, it will focus on three major topics in political economy: control over land; taxation and investment; and anti-state resistance. The course will draw from political science's examinations of how and why states succeed, fail, and conduct major reforms by examining these questions in the context of rural India's small farmers. Indian political institutions are simultaneously lauded as extremely stable, highly-prone to decentralized rebellion, and models for voice and innovation from which the rest of the world has much to learn. Third, the course will help students hone their abilities as effective, insightful researchers, analysts of political economy, and writers.

Overall, this course will expect students to engage with the political economy literature – both historical and contemporary – in order to develop two short research papers and present well-argued positions in class-wide debates on the nature of political, economic and social change driven by and for agriculturalists in rural India.

## Requirements

### 1. Reading:<sup>1</sup>

The Syllabus lists required and optional reading. Further reading will be available on the course website. You are expected to have completed all the required readings before class and reflected upon them such that you can be called on to critique or defend any reading.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is drawn from Macartan Humphreys' Fall 2009 syllabus for Political Economy of Development (G841). His syllabus is an excellent reference for theoretical and statistical analysis.

The reading loads are not particularly heavy but some of the readings are difficult. You should aim to read each piece carefully and reflectively. First, before approaching each reading, take time to remind yourself of the week's key questions and how they relate to what you learned in prior weeks. Then briefly skim the reading to get a sense of the themes it covers, and, before reading in any depth, write down questions you hope the work will be able to answer for you. Next, read the introduction and conclusion. By this point you should have a good feeling for the big picture of the piece. Now ask yourself: are the claims presented by the author surprising? Are they plausible to you? Can you come up with any examples of cases that seem inconsistent with the argument's logic? Is the reading answering the questions you had initially noted? Then ask yourself: what types of evidence or arguments would you require to find the results convincing?

Now read through the entire piece, paying attention throughout to how the arguments are used to support the author's claims. This critical analysis will help you not only to understand the argument but also to recall and discuss it in the future. As you see issues that you find unconvincing, write them down and bring them to class for discussion. Also be sure you make note of particularly good work, for example because you find new, surprising information or because the author produced a convincing argument that you had not considered in advance. This will help you to produce work of a similar, high caliber in the future. You are encouraged to dig further into specific cases or data sets if you are so inclined, such that you can probe and test the arguments you bring to class.

## **2. Class participation:**

25% of the grade will be determined by contributions to class, based on each student's substantive engagement in discussions on a weekly basis. We will determine a format for student presentations based upon class size and preferences.

## **3. Position papers & debates:**

15% of the grade will be based on succinct position papers submitted prior to debates in weeks 6 and 9, as well as the student's defense of these positions during debates. The position papers should be emailed to me by noon the day before the debate.

## **4. Research papers:**

The remaining 60% of the grade will be based on two short research papers. These assignments will be cumulative, and are designed to help students hone historical research skills (the ability to efficiently identify, synthesize and summarize a range of material, in this case on the political, economic, and social dynamics of a given place and historical time), political economy analysis (theoretical, qualitative and quantitative investigation of phenomena related to the distribution of power in politics or economics, with particular attention to the ties between political and economic institutions), and academic writing skills (the ability to communicate ideas and mastery of a subject clearly and effectively).

**Paper 1** (10-12 pages) will examine an agrarian region of the student's choice within the Indian subcontinent where authorities historically struggled to tax inhabitants. The selected area should be a region which is unfamiliar to you. Students should select a

region and be ready to explain its appropriateness for this paper by 16 January's class. In this short paper, students are expected to explain the relevant social, economic and political institutions that preceded the given region's taxation system; the process by which the institutions of taxation were created; and the potential factors that could have contributed to challenges of the state's taxation authority. Students should develop testable hypotheses about the scope of each possible challenge to state taxation, identify basic empirical data available for testing each hypothesis, analyze this data and draw tentative conclusions about the nature of state taxation. Students should be clear about the limitations of their analysis based on data availability. The final portion of the paper should explain how, if at all, the state was able to overcome these challenges, and how the resulting structure of taxation influenced the state's influence over citizens and their welfare. This paper is due on Monday, 11 February, 2013.

**Paper 2** (20-25 pages) should display original research and probe, in depth, the course theme of either land politics or rural rebellion in India. This paper should concern the same geographic region on which you wrote paper 1, but may address either an historical or a contemporary phenomenon. The research paper will contain: (i) a theoretical argument that engages with the course theme you have selected, (ii) an empirical test of that argument, which can be based on historical records of patterns in investment or other quantifiable behavior, survey data, or observational data which allow careful analysis of trends in state or agriculturalists' strategies within relevant domains, and (iii) a discussion of either an academic research agenda and/or policy prescriptions that result from your argument. This paper is due on 6 March, 2013.

## Policies

### ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

Assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class on the date which they are due. They should be printed. Please do not send them by email.

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

You will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from an A- to a B+) per day late.

If you are concerned about meeting a deadline, please approach me as early as possible so that we can discuss strategies to ensure timely submission of your best work.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY<sup>2</sup>

The work you do in this course must be your own work. You are expected to approach research as a means of engaging, through writing, in a purposeful, scholarly discussion of issues that are crucial to building meaningful lives. Understanding, augmenting, engaging in dialogue with, and challenging the work of others are part of becoming an effective citizen in a complex society. Plagiarism does not simply devalue Stanford University, the degree for which you are studying, and your fellow students' work in this

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<sup>2</sup> This text is slightly modified version of the Council of the Writing Program Administrators' article titled "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices", Best Practice 1. The full article is accessible at: <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>.

course; it hurts you as a human being, because you have avoided thinking independently and have lost the opportunity to participate in broader social conversations.

Please review Stanford University's Honor Code as well as the American Political Science Association's style manual for citation guidelines (below). You are expected to uphold these standards for research, including appropriate use and acknowledgement of sources. Please keep in mind the severity of the penalties for violating these standards.

**Honor Code:** <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/judicialaffairs/policy/honor-code>

**APSA Style Manual:** <http://www.csuchico.edu/lref/pols/APSA.pdf>

## Books & Required Readings

3 books are required for this course. They are available for purchase at the Stanford bookstore and on reserve at Green library for 2-hour loan:

(1) Palagummi Sainath (1996) *Everybody loves a good drought : stories from India's poorest districts*. Delhi: Penguin Group India. ISBN: 074726032X, 9780747260325. Library Call Number (Green): HC440 .P6 S24 1999. Price (new): \$32.75

(2) Paul Brass (1994) *The politics of India since independence, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521453623, 9780521453622. Call Number (Green): DS480.84 .B67 1994. Price (new, hardcover): \$37.95

(3) Samuel Popkin (1979) *The rational peasant: the political economy of rural society in Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 0520035615, 9780520035614, 0520039548, 9780520039544. Call Number (Green): HD1513 .V5 P66 1979. Price (new): \$31.95

The following 2 books are strongly recommended, but not required for purchase:

(1) Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (2002) *India: Development & Participation*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0-19-925749-3, 0-19-925748-5. Available on-line using [searchworks.stanford.edu](http://searchworks.stanford.edu) (via [dx.doi.org](http://dx.doi.org)). Price (new): \$50.00

(2) Debraj Ray (1998) *Development Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0-691-01706-8. Call Number (Business-Main): HD75 .R39 1998. Price (new): \$46.99

Additional required readings will be accessible via links in the syllabus or will be posted on blackboard.

## Reading Schedule

### Week 1: Seeing like a farmer – understanding rural India today.

P. Sainath (1996) *Everybody loves a good draught: stories from India's poorest districts*.

- “Crime & No Punishment: Targeting the poor” (231-270),
- “Lenders, Losers, Crooks & Credit: Usury, debt and the rural Indian” (193-231).

#### ***Optional Reading:***

Romila Thapar (2004) *Early India: From the Origins to Ad 1300*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 0-520-24225-4. Call Number (Green): DS436 .A3 T43 2002

Percival Spear (1990) *A History of India: Volume 2: From the 16th Century to the 20th Century*. Delhi: Penguin Books India. ISBN: 9780140138368. Call Number (SAL 3): DS436 .T37 V.2

Sumit Sarkar (1983) *Modern India, 1885-1947*. Madras: Macmillan. ISBN: 0333904257, 9780333904251. Call Number (Green): DS479 .S265 1983

Śekhara Bandyopādhyāya (2004) *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman Pvt Ltd. ISBN: 81-250-2596-0. [Not in Stanford's library.]

### Week 2: Acting like a state – a brief intro to rural Indian politics.

Philip Stern (2011) *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty & the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-539373-6. Available on-line using searchworks.stanford.edu (via dx.doi.org)

- “A Sort of Republic for the Management of Trade” (41-60),
- “A Sword in One Hand and Money in the Other” (185-206).

Paul Brass (1994) *The Politics of India Since Independence, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*.

- “Introduction: continuities and discontinuities between pre- and post-Independence India” (1-28),
- “Political change, political structure & the functioning of government” (31-66),
- “Political aspects of agricultural change” (303-335).

Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (2002) *India: Development & Participation*.

- “India in Comparative Perspective” (64-111).

#### ***Optional Reading:***

P. Stern (2011) *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty & the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*.

- “A Politic of Civil and Military Power” (61-82),
- “Political Science and Martial Prudence” (83-99).

### Week 3: Thinking like a political economist – what’s our toolbox?

Samuel Popkin (1979) *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*.

- The Rational Peasant (1-31),
- The Political Economy of Peasant Society (32-82).

Douglass North (1990) *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-39416-3, 0-521-39734-0. Call Number (Green): HB99.5 .N67 1990

- Chapter 1: “An introduction to institutions and institutional change” (3-10).

Avinash Dixit (2004) *Lawlessness and Economics: Alternative Modes of Governance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9780691130347. Call Number (Green): HD87 .D588 2004

- Chapter 1: “Economics with and without the law” (1-24).

Debraj Ray (1998) *Development Economics*.

- Chapter 10: “Rural and Urban” (345-397)
- Chapter 11: “Markets in Agriculture” (403-414)
- Optional Reading:**
- Chapter 2: “Economic Development: Overview” (7-44)
- Chapter 5: “History, Expectations, and Development” (131-161)
- Chapter 12: “Land” (415-462)

### Week 4: The foundations of rural control & resistance: land politics.

M. N. Srinivas (1959) “The Dominant Caste in Rampura,” *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 61(1): 1-16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/666209>

M. S. Mishra (1972) “Agricultural Transformation in an Indian Village: Some Social Aspects,” *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 7(4): 589-614. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27765270>

Susan Bayly (1999) *Caste, Society and Politics in India*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0-521-26434-0, 0-521-79842-6. Call Number (Green, Lane Room/Non-circulating): DS436 .N47 1987 PT.4:V.3

- Chapter 9: “‘Caste Wars’ and the mandate of violence,” (342-364).

G. Thimmaiah and A. Aziz (1983) "The Political Economy of Land Reforms in Karnataka, A South Indian State," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23(7): 810-829.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2644290>

T. Besley and R. Burgess (2000) "Land Reform, Poverty Reduction, and Growth: Evidence from India," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 115(2): 389-430.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2586998>

Nitya Rao (2008) *Good Women do not Inherit Land: Politics of Land & Gender in India*. Delhi: Social Science Press and Orient Blackswan. ISBN: 81-87358-24-6. [Not in Stanford's library.]

- Chapter 4: "Reinventing Tradition: Agrarian Movements in History" (109-145).

## **Week 5: Incentives for (mis)governance: rural taxation & investment.**

Stephen Haber, Douglass North and Barry Weingast (2008) *Political Institutions and Financial Development*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8047-5692-1, 978-0-8047-5693-8. Call Number (Green): HG173 .P655 2008

- Chapter 1: "Political Institutions and Financial Development," (1-9).

Jean Oi (1989) *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: The Political Economy of Village Government*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 0-520-07637-0. Call Number (Green): JS7352 .034 1989

- Chapter 2: "Dividing the Harvest" (13-42),
- Chapter 3: "The Struggle over the Surplus" (43-65).

Rachel Kranton and Anand Swamy (1999) "The Hazards of Piecemeal Reform: British Civil Courts and the Credit Market in Colonial India," *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 58 (1): 1-24. <http://public.econ.duke.edu/~rek8/thehazardsofpiecemealreform.pdf>

Tirthankar Roy (2011) "Indigo and Law in Colonial India," *Economic History Review*, Vol. 64 (51): 60-75. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2010.00534.x/pdf>

Ashutosh Varshney (1994) *Democracy, Development, and the Countryside: Urban-Rural Struggles in India*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0-521-44153-6, 0-521-64625-1. Call Number (Green): HN690.Z9 C6846 1995

- Introduction & Chapter 1: "Town-country struggles in development: A brief overview of existing theories" (1-27),
- Chapter 3: "Policy change in the mid-1960s".
- Optional Reading:**
- Chapter 4: "Rise of agrarian power".

**Week 6: Debate.** *What's the most effective form of rural taxation?*

**Paper I. due.**

**Week 7: Rebellion in the fields: understanding everyday rural conflict.**

Palagummi Sainath (1996) *Everybody loves a good draught: stories from India's poorest districts.*

- "With Their Own Weapons: When the poor fight back" (371-418).

Paul Brass (1997) *Theft of an Idol.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0-691-02651-3, 0-691-02650-5. Call Number (Green): HN690 .Z9 V5 1997

- Chapter 2: "Background" (32-57),
- Chapter 3: "Theft of an Idol" (58-96).

Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (2007) *Women and Social Reform in Modern India, Volume II.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press. ISBN: 978-0-253-35269-9, 978-0-253-22049-3. Call Number (Green): HQ1743 .W66 2008

- Chapter 21: "The Second 'Women's War' and the Emergence of Democratic Government in Manipur", (195-210).

Saugata Bhaduri, Ed. (2008) *Translating Power: Stories, Essays, Criticism.* Delhi: Katha. ISBN: 978-81-89934-24-8. [Not in Stanford's library.]

- A. Mitra, "Swadeshyatra" (9-27).

**Week 8: Rebellion in the streets: large-scale rural rebellion & impact.**

A. Varshney (1994) *Democracy, Development, and the Countryside: Urban-Rural Struggles in India.*

- Chapter 5: "Organizing the countryside in the 1980s".

Madhu Kishwar (2008) *Zealous Reformers, Deadly Laws: Battling Stereotypes.* Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. ISBN: 0761936378. Call Number (Green): HQ1236.5 .I4 K57 2008

- Chapter 15: "Nature of Women's Mobilization in Rural India" (342-372).

Vivek Srinivasan (Forthcoming) *Understanding Public Services in Tamil Nadu.*

- Chapter 5: "Collective action in Villupuram" (206-304).

**Week 9: Debate.** *When to buy into rebellion? The case of Telangana.*

**Paper II. due.**

**Week 10: Conclusion.** *What can we learn from small farmers in India?*

Timothy Besley (1994) "How Do Market Failures Justify Interventions in Rural Credit Markets?" *The World Bank Research Observer*, Vol. 9(1): 27-47.

[http://www.princeton.edu/rpds/papers/Besley\\_How\\_Do\\_Market\\_Failures\\_Justify\\_Interventions\\_in\\_Rural\\_Credit\\_Markets.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/rpds/papers/Besley_How_Do_Market_Failures_Justify_Interventions_in_Rural_Credit_Markets.pdf)

Carolyn Sachs, Ed. (1997) *Women Working in the Environment*. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis. ISBN: 1-56032-629-8. [Not in Stanford's library.]

- Chapter 7: Priti Ramamurthy, "Rural Women and Irrigation: Patriarchy, Class, and the Modernizing State in South India" (103-126).

Helen Margetts, Perri 6, and Christopher Hood, Eds. (2010) *Paradoxes of Modernization: Unintended Consequences of Public Policy Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0199573549. Available on-line using searchworks.stanford.edu (via dx.doi.org)

- Chapter 7: Devi Sridhar, "Addressing Under-nutrition in India: Do 'Rational' Approaches Work?" (119-137).