

# IDEV\*6800: THEORIES AND DEBATES IN DEVELOPMENT

Course Outline  
International Development Studies  
University of Guelph

**Fall 2021**  
**Ryan Briggs**

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**Classes:** Thursday, 11:30–2:20 in MacKinnon 800C

**Email:** rbriggs@uoguelph.ca

**Office hours:** Thursday, 2:30 to 4 in MacKinnon 904, or by appointment on Zoom.

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*“Being cultivated is a matter of not having read any book in particular,  
but of being able to find your bearings within books as a system,  
which requires you to know that they form a system and to  
be able to locate each element in relation to the others.”*

—Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk about Books You Haven’t Read* (Bloomsbury, 2007).

## **Course Objectives**

IDEV\*6800 offers a doctoral seminar in development theory. Its central aim is to develop theoretical insights about the contributions of social, political, and economic theory to the study of international development through individual reading and class discussion. The goal is to *train researchers* rather than to try to answer specific international development-related questions. Students are expected to play a leading role in the seminar. The required readings will serve as a central focus for discussion and debate.

## **Course Description**

This course was developed by Ryan Briggs, based in part on past versions of the course offered by Craig Johnson and Adam Sneyd. After briefly surveying the philosophical foundations of international development, the course begins with five classes on macro-structural theories. In this section we cover major social theorists, dependency theory, the state, and we lightly touch on growth theory. The next section focuses on micro or agentic theory. We cover political economy and the micro-foundations of institutions. We then move closer to the present and cover situated knowledge, post-development, and the recent empirical turn in development research. While the content of the course familiarizes you with some main themes in international development, the ultimate goal is to prepare you to create knowledge in this area.

You will note that the course eschews “topics” like climate change, gender, or conflict. This is intentional and I did this because: 1. I really dislike how such major issues get siloed off into

their own little spaces, and 2. The point of the course is to cover theories and introduce you to different ways of creating knowledge in international development. Thus, I have tried to weave theoretically-relevant material on gender, scarcity, or conflict into the syllabus where appropriate. Consider this an instance of gender (and environmental, and conflict, etc) mainstreaming.

### **Readings**

You don't have to buy any books for this course. All readings will be posted electronically in the Ares course reserve system or will be posted directly to CourseLink.

### **Assessments**

1. **Class participation.** It is expected that each student will arrive at the weekly seminar having read all of the week's readings. There is no grade for participation, but it is expected that students will engage with the readings and with each other during the weekly seminar. Students should be prepared to introduce the weekly readings, highlighting questions and critical comments for class discussion. It is therefore essential that you attend all of the seminars. Students who are unable to attend the seminar must inform the instructor, providing a complete summary of the week's readings, in advance of the class they are going to miss.
  2. **Book reviews.** Students will submit one analytical paper (7-8 pages in length) that reviews one book. A central aim here is to identify the book's core objectives, evidence and contributions, making theoretical, methodological and empirical connections to other perspectives being considered in the course. The value of this assignment is 30 per cent and the papers are due by 15 October at the latest.
  3. **Term papers.** Students will hand in an opinionated, focused literature review where they review research from their discipline using some of the lenses or perspectives covered in class. For example, if you are a geographer interested in conflict related to water scarcity, then you could critically review recent and foundational research on this topic from your discipline and (as appropriate) frame it as agentic research. Alternatively, maybe you think the literature on institutions and path dependence offers a better frame. The papers will be evaluated on the basis of their ability to accurately represent the research material and to subject it to critical scrutiny. I want you to show me in the writing that you have learned enough about these general perspectives that you can: 1. notice specific instances of these general perspectives, 2. critically evaluate discipline-specific work using the tools from the course. I am *very* happy to discuss your ideas for this paper and to read outlines in advance. **This assignment is worth 70 percent of your grade and is due both via dropbox on courselink and via email to the group no later than 21 November.**
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## Weekly Schedule

**Sept 9. Historical and philosophical foundations:** *How good is our present place and time? How should one even go about answer a question like that? What is development? Can or should we disentangle political and economic development? Why do we—people in wealthy countries—study development? Should “we” study development?*

- Deaton, Angus (2013). “Globalization and the Great Escape,” In *The Great Escape*, Chapter 6. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.
- Sen, Amartya (1999). “The Ends and Means of Development” and “Poverty as Capabilities Deprivation,” in *Development as Freedom*, Chapters 1-3. New York: Knopf.
- Nussbaum, Martha. (1997). Capabilities and human rights. *Fordham L. Rev.*, 66, 273.
- Singer, Peter. (2010). Is it Wrong Not to Help?, in *The Life You Can Save*, Chapter 2. New York, NY: Random House Incorporated.

## Development & macro structures

**Sept 16. Social Theory 1:** *Here we can see early social theory being worked out. Be mindful that the first two readings are early and seminal (seminal in that they help to produce so much further work). This class has more of a focus on power and the state. While reading, think about the following questions: What is the glue that holds society together? What are the conditions that make social order possible? How does structural economic change relate to social order? How does politics respond to changing economic orders.*

- Marx, Karl (1973). Introduction (by Marx, not the editor), In *Grundrisse*. Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books.
- Weber, Max. (1947). *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, part I, sections 5-8; part II, sections 15-21; part III, section 2; and part IV, sections 1, 2, and 3. New York: Free Press.
- Huntington, Samuel. P. (1971). The change to change: Modernization, development, and politics. *Comparative Politics*, 3(3), 283-322.
- Pritchett, Lant, Michael Woolcock, and Matt Andrews. (2013). Looking like a state: techniques of persistent failure in state capability for implementation. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49(1), 1-18.

**Sept 23. Social Theory 2:** *This class has more of a focus on identity. What is the glue that holds society together? What are the conditions that make social order possible? What are the sources of solidarity? How does structural economic change relate to social order?*

- Durkheim, Emile. (1997). *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by W. D. Halls, book I, chapters 1-3; book II, chapters 1-2; book III, chapter 1; conclusion. Simon and Schuster.
- Polanyi, Karl. (2001). Evolution of the Market Pattern, In *The Great Transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*, Chapter 5. Beacon Press.
- Englebert, Peter. (2000). Pre-colonial institutions, post-colonial states, and economic development in tropical Africa. *Political Research Quarterly*, 53(1), 7-36.

- Robinson, Amanda. (2014). National versus ethnic identification in Africa: Modernization, colonial legacy, and the origins of territorial nationalism. *World Politics*, 66(4), 709-746.

**Sept 30. Dependency and world systems:** *How does Frank's or Rodney's theory build on earlier social theory? What is the ontology and epistemology of the theories?*

- Frank, Andre Gunder. (1966). "The Development of Underdevelopment." *Monthly Review* 18(4), 17-32.
- Valenzuela, J. Samuel, and Arturo Valenzuela. (1978). Modernization and dependency: Alternative perspectives in the study of Latin American underdevelopment. *Comparative Politics*, 10(4), 535-557.
- Rodney, Walter (1972). Some Questions on Development, In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Chapter 1, Verso Books.
- Kvangraven, I. H. (2020) Beyond the Stereotype: Restating the Relevance of the Dependency Research Programme. *Development and Change*.

**Oct 7. The State:** *Ontologically, what are states in these approaches (aggregators of preferences, actors that do things, sites of contestation, something else)? What do we gain or lose when we understand states in these different ways?*

- Tilly, Charles. (1985). War Making and State Making as Organized Crime, In Peter Evans et al., eds., *Bringing the State Back In*. chapter 5, Cambridge University Press.
- Brautigam, Deborah. (2008). Introduction: Taxation and State-Building in Developing Countries, In Brautigam, D., Fjeldstad, O. H., & Moore, M. (Eds.). *Taxation and state-building in developing countries: Capacity and consent*. Chapter 1, Cambridge University Press.
- Haney, Lynne. (2000). Feminist state theory: Applications to jurisprudence, criminology, and the welfare state. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 641-666.
- Mann, Laura, and Marie Berry. (2016). Understanding the political motivations that shape Rwanda's emergent developmental state. *New Political Economy*, 21(1), 119-144.

**Oct 14. Growth theory, geographic determinants of long-run growth, multiple equilibria:** *Why do economies get "stuck"? Note the ontology of the explanations. What are the main parts of the explanation and how do they interact? What do such explanations leave out and why?*

- Todaro, Michael and Stephen Smith. (2014). The Harrod-Domar Growth Model In Todaro and Smith, *Economic Development*, 12th Ed, pgs. 121–124.
- Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo. (2012). Think Again, Again, In *Poor economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty*. Chapter 1, Public Affairs. Chicago.
- Todaro, Michael and Stephen Smith. (2014) Michael Kremer's O-ring Theory of Economic Development, In Todaro and Smith, *Economic Development*, 12th Ed, pgs. 187–191.
- Diamond, Jared. (1997). Farmer Power, In *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Chapter 4. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Sachs, Jeffrey (2000) *Tropical Underdevelopment*, CID Working Paper No. 57.

## Development & micro-agents

**Oct 21. Agentic political economy:** *Apply the methodological discussion in Levi to the work of Popkin and Bates. How do these explanations differ from those of the prior section?*

- Levi, Margaret (1997). “A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis,” in Marc I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. Chapter 2, pp. 19-42. Cambridge UP.
- Popkin, Samuel. (1979). Precolonial Vietnam and Corporatism and Colonialism, In *The rational peasant: The political economy of rural society in Vietnam*, Chapter 1, LA: University of California Press.
- Bates, Robert. (1981). Policies Towards Cash Crops for Export and The Food Sector, In *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The political basis of agricultural policies*. Chapters 1 & 2, Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Oct 28. Institutions, comparative development, and path dependence:** *How do agentic theories explain macro phenomena? What is doing the work in these explanations, the agents or the structures? Consider the epistemology of the three readings. Does any specific kinds of “confrontation with data” appeal more to you? Why?*

- North, D. C. (1989). Institutions and economic growth: An historical introduction. *World development*, 17(9), 1319-1332.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. (2006). Paths of Economic and Political Development, In Barry R. Weingast and Donald A. Wittman, (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. Chapter. 37, pp. 673-92, Oxford UP.
- Alsan, Marcela. (2015) The Effect of the TseTse Fly on African Development. *American Economic Review*, 105(1), 382–410.

## Contemporary Approaches, epistemology

**Nov 4. Situated Knowledge:** *What is the goal of this research? What is the ontology and epistemology? (How) can we situate knowledge without essentializing identities? (How) can we aggregate knowledge across positions?*

- Hartsock, Nancy. (1983) The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism. In: Harding S., Hintikka M.B. (eds) *Discovering Reality*. Synthese Library, 283-310.
- Harding, Sandra. (1987) Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method? In *Feminism and Methodology*, edited by S. Harding, pp. 1–14. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mama, Amina. (2007). Is it ethical to study Africa? Preliminary thoughts on scholarship and freedom. *African Studies Review*, 50(1), 1-26.
- Sabaratnam, Meera. (2017). Introduction In *Decolonising Intervention: international statebuilding in Mozambique*, Rowman & Littlefield International, Chapter 1.

**Nov 11. Post-modern approaches:** *What is the goal of this research? What is the ontology and epistemology? Where is power located in these approaches (and how does that differ from the research we read in other weeks)?*

- Foucault, Michel. (1984). Panopticism In *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), 206–213. Pantheon Books.
- Rist, Gilbert. (2008). “Definitions of Development,” in *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 3rd Ed. London and New York: Zed Books, 8-24.
- Gupta, Akhil (2012). *Red Tape: bureaucracy, structural violence and poverty in India*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 1-55.

**Nov 18. The empirical (technocratic?) turn:** *What is the goal of this research? What is the ontology and epistemology? Consider the ethical issues in (not) running policy experiments.*

- Ogden, Timothy. (Ed.). (2017). Interviews with Michael Kremer, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, and Lant Pritchett In *Experimental Conversations: Perspectives on Randomized Trials in Development Economics*. MIT Press, Chapters 1, 2, 9.
- White, H. (2019). The twenty-first century experimenting society: the four waves of the evidence revolution. *Palgrave Communications*, 5(1), 1-7.
- Banerjee, A., Duflo, E., Goldberg, N., Karlan, D., Osei, R., Parienté, W., ... & Udry, C. (2015). A multifaceted program causes lasting progress for the very poor: Evidence from six countries. *Science*, 348(6236), 1260799.
- Blair, R. A., Karim, S. M., & Morse, B. S. (2019). Establishing the rule of law in weak and war-torn states: Evidence from a field experiment with the Liberian National Police. *American Political Science Review*, 113(3), 641-657.
- Meyer, M. N., Heck, P. R., Holtzman, G. S., Anderson, S. M., Cai, W., Watts, D. J., & Chabris, C. F. (2019). Objecting to experiments that compare two unobjectionable policies or treatments. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(22), 10723-10728.

**Nov 25. Final Class: Term paper presentations**

- Students must ensure that their term papers are distributed in advance of the seminar.

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## Policy Statements

### Accommodating tiny children

Tiny children are great. If you are breastfeeding or simply can't find childcare, feel free to bring your baby to class. We'll make it work.

### Trying our best during a global pandemic

You are trying to learn—and I am trying to teach—during a global pandemic. If we're lucky, all that will mean for us is that the semester will be more stressful than usual. I'm usually pretty strict with basically everything related to my courses, and I usually hold myself to the same high standard that I hold my students. For example, I expect things turned in on time and in return I grade material and get it back to students quickly. But seriously, there is a global pandemic going on. So let's just agree

that we will all try our best. I will cut you some slack, and I expect you to cut me some slack, provided that we communicate with each other about our needs and constraints.

### **COVID-19 Disclaimer**

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the [COVID-19 website](#) and circulated by email.

### **Late penalties**

Late submissions will receive a penalty of five (5) per cent per day (weekends and holidays included). To avoid this, come talk to me well in advance or missing a deadline so that we can adjust your deadlines.

### **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Graduate Calendar: <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/>

### **Academic Misconduct**

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Graduate Calendar: <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/>

### **Recording of Materials**

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate, or guest lecturer.