PROPERTY RIGHTS AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

A joint course by

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Economics                        Political Science

Overview: The goal of this course is to introduce students to a set of important topics in the political economy of property rights—and to use these topics to develop familiarity with the tools and methods of political economy. Readings range across history—from Ancient Egypt, to Medieval Genoa, to the 19th Century American Frontier, to current transitions from communism. Among other subjects, we study what property rights are, where they come from, how they affect countries’ patterns of development and rates of economic growth, the relative advantages of private versus public ownership, and experiences with privatization around the world. Analysis draws on leading works in the economic theory of property rights, as well as political science scholarship on political institutions and development.

Requirements and Grades: Students will be expected to write: (1) weekly one-page critical assessments of some of the reading; (2) a 10-page discussion paper on how a particular question related to property rights might be researched. Students are particularly encouraged to use the discussion paper to explore possible dissertation topics. The discussion paper, weekly commentaries, and oral participation will each count for 1/3 of the grade.
**Theme 1 [week 2]: Property rights problems—definition and review**


______________Additional recommendations _________________________


**Theme 2 [week 3]: Where do property rights come from?**


______________ Additional recommendations _________________________


**Theme 3 [week 4]: Property rights as contracts**


________________ Additional recommendations ______________________


Bates Robert, Markets and States in Africa. Cambridge

Alston, Lee, Gary D. Libecap, and Bernardo Mueller Titles, conflict, and land use: the development of property rights and land reform on the Brazilian Amazon frontier University of Michigan Press 1999

**Theme 4 [week 5]: Property Rights and Violence**


________________ Additional recommendations ______________________


Olson Mancur, "Dictatorship, Democracy and Development" American Political Science Review 87(3) 803-32.


**Theme 5: Privatization: creating scarcity**


**Theme 6: The privatization process**

*World Experience*


*Latin America*


*Europe*

Theme 7: Privatization: inventing a property regime

Eastern Europe


China


Additional recommendations

Turner, Mathew, Loren Brandt, and Scott Rozelle, "Local Government Behavior and Property Rights Formation in Rural China."

Theme 8: Commitment


Additional recommendations


Theme 9: Instability and Economic Growth


