

PS326 The Political Economy of Development

Seminar Leader: Gale Raj

Course Times: Wednesdays & Fridays 9:00am - 10:30am

Email: g.raj@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course engages on the topic of 'development', linked to social-economic-ecological conditions and outcomes, in countries of the Global South. The course begins with an understanding of the long history of social conditions and formations from the colonial periods (including during decades of conquest) to the post-World War II of neoliberalism and Bretton Woods institutions, to present-day dynamics of globalization and global production networks/global value chains. Readings are a mix of theories and empirics. We will heavily focus on the school of thought of structuralism and dependency theory/studies which are immersed in concepts of core-periphery, peripheralization, underdevelopment, and unequal exchange. A wide range of interdisciplinary readings aim to cover (as much as possible) different parts of the Global South.

*It is highly recommended that students have already taken IS303 Origins of Political Economy as a prerequisite to this course.

Requirements

Readings will be shared on Google Classroom.

In-class participation

Please make sure to read all the assigned texts (on your own, in pairs, or small groups) before class.

Please read actively – try to relate what you are reading with what you already know and have gained knowledge about the topic from other courses or from your own personal interests and explorations (engage in a personal self-reflective discussion). While reading, ask yourself questions, be curious, and make notes that help summarize the main points and stories in a way that is understandable to you. Please come to class with three to five points written down which are a mix of what you found important and interesting, something new you learned, and further questions of what you did not understand well enough or would like to probe further.

Participating in different ways, either through larger group discussions or in small group/partner exercises, is an integral part of the learning process and it is expected that every student makes a good effort in this regard.

Course assignments, grade breakdown and deadlines

1. Discussion participation 20%

Half of this grade will be based on in-class discussions of the readings and also include participation in small group work or in pairs. The second half of this grade will be based on discussions of your policy memo outline and presentation of your research report outline.

2. Two discussion papers 15% per response paper (30% in total)

Choose two seminar week readings (this includes two readings for both days of the seminar week). THE FIRST DISCUSSION PAPER IS DUE BEFORE WEEK 7. The SECOND DISCUSSION PAPER IS DUE BEFORE WEEK 14.

The discussion paper must compare and contrast two readings from the chosen seminar week. The discussion paper must do the following: 1) discuss the problematic for each reading (what problem, issue, process or event is focused on in the reading?); 2) explains the conceptual or theoretical framework used by the author(s) to understand the problematic; and 3) your assessment on the strength and weaknesses of the author(s) analyses, findings, and conclusions in a comparative fashion.

Word count is between 1,000 and 1,250 words (not including the references).

Each discussion paper for the week's readings must be turned in in Google Classroom BEFORE the first class of that week. For example, if you are writing a discussion paper for week 4, you must upload your discussion paper in Google Classrooms BEFORE 5:00pm on Tuesday of week 4.

3. Outline and presentation 10%

In preparation for the research paper, you will be required to write a 1.5 to 2 pages outline of the research paper, which will be presented and discussed in class.

**IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT YOU DISCUSS THE FINAL RESEARCH PAPER WITH ME DURING OFFICE HOURS

What to include in the paper outline:

- I. **Introduction** – what is the topic and why have you chosen it – why is it important and/or interesting? Think of a topic which relates to what we have covered in class or is about the political economy of development (e.g. core-periphery and dependency between the Global

North and the Global South, neoliberalism, globalized production, the role of multinational corporations, the role of the state, etc.). Come up with a research question and a case study on this topic.

Write at three or four sentences in this section. Keep it brief, clear, and concise.

II. **Theory/ies and Concepts** – write about the theory and concept (they can be more than one) you will use to analyze the case study and answer the research question (in the analysis section III). Briefly summarize the theory/ies and concept(s) – if more than one, also write about how they relate to each other to form a framework for analysis.

Write about half or two-thirds of a page for this section of the outline.

III. **Analysis** – introduce and present your preliminary research on the case study. A case study will include the following elements:

- a) an event, process, relationship, or interaction which has occurred or is occurring
- b) a location and scale (e.g. a space or a city within a country, a country, region of the world, or globally)
- c) actors or organizations involved (e.g. government agency, international organization, companies, civil society organizations, workers, etc.)
- d) an effect or outcome e.g. on the economy, people (livelihoods, incomes, wages, etc.), communities, the environment, etc.

Write half a page for this section of the outline.

**The outline will be shared in advance of the presentation with everyone in class.

Give a 10-15-minute presentation of preliminary research for the paper based on the outline. Presentations will be scheduled during week 11.

4. Final research paper 40%

The structure of the research paper must include the following:

1. Introduction
2. Background (optional)
3. Literature Review and analytical framework
4. Analysis
5. Conclusion

The word count of the research paper is between 3,000 to 3,500 words (not including references). The deadline for the research paper is Friday 15 May, 11:59pm in Google Classrooms.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, accommodations@berlin.bard.edu to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the Bard College Berlin Accessibility page. Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Assignments that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Assignments more than 24 hours late will not be accepted. Letters of accommodations from students must be shared with me at the start of the semester.

Schedule

Week	Topic
1	Introduction
2	Underdevelopment
3	Structuralism and dependency theory/studies
4	Peripheral capitalism
5	Film
6	The South Commission
7	Bretton Woods Institutions in the Global South
8	State-capital relations and multinational corporations
9	Global commodity chains, global value chains, & global production networks
10	Globalized production, racialization, and workers
11	Presentations
12	Globalized production, work, and agriculture
13	Frontiers and futures
14	Wrapping-up

Week 1 – Introduction

Wednesday 28 January

Bhambra, G. K. (2021) 'Colonial global economy: towards a theoretical reorientation of political economy', *Review of International Political Economy*, vol. 28:2, 307-322.

Friday 30 January

Alatas, Syed Hussein (1977) Introduction, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Gerakbuda Enterprise.

Week 2 – Underdevelopment

Wednesday 4 February

Rodney, W. (1972) 'Europe and the Roots of African Underdevelopment to 1885' (Chapter 5), *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Black Classic Press.

Friday 6 February

Furtado, C. (1977) 'Economic and social background of the territorial occupation' (Chapter 2), *Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems*, Cambridge University Press.

Furtado, C. (1977) 'First half of the nineteenth century' (Chapter 3), *Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems*, Cambridge University Press.

Week 3 – Structuralism and dependency theory/studies

Wednesday 11 February

Furtado, C. (1977) 'the transformation of international trade in the second half of the nineteenth century and its impact on Latin America' (Chapter 4), *Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems*, Cambridge University Press.

Dos Santos, T. (1970) "The Structure of Dependence", *The American Economic Review*, vol. 60, no. 2.

Cardoso, F. H. (1972) 'Dependency and Development in Latin America', *New Left Review*, 74.

Friday 13 February

C. Kay (1989) Chapter 1 - The Challenge from the Periphery, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment*, Routledge

C. Kay (1989) Chapter 2 - The Structuralist School of Development, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment*, Routledge

Week 4 – Peripheral capitalism

Wednesday 18 February

Amin, S. (1974) 'The Formations of Peripheral Capitalism Part 1: The Transition to Peripheral Capitalism' (Chapter 2), *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, Monthly Review Press.

Amin, S. (1974) sub-section on 'Economic Domination of the Periphery by the Center' (page 292-299), *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, Monthly Review Press.

Friday 20 February

Amin, S. (1974) 'The Formations of Peripheral Capitalism Part 3: The Social Formations' (Chapter 2), *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, Monthly Review Press.

Week 5 – Film

Wednesday 25 February & Friday 27 February

Week 6 – The South Commission

Wednesday 4 March

The South Commission (1990) 'The South and its Tasks' (Chapter 1), *The Challenge to the South: The Report of the South Commission*, Oxford University Press.

The South Commission (1990) 'The State of the South' (Chapter 2), *The Challenge to the South: The Report of the South Commission*, Oxford University Press.

Friday 6 March

The South Commission (1990) 'Self-reliant and People-Centred Development: The National Dimension' (Chapter 3), *The Challenge to the South: The Report of the South Commission*, Oxford University Press.

Week 7 – The Bretton Woods institutions in the Global South

Wednesday 11 March

Bond, P. (2003) 'Bretton Woods bankruptcies in Southern Africa' (Chapter 3), *Against Global Apartheid: South Africa meets the World Bank, IMF, and International Finance*, Zed Books.

Bello, W. (2000) The Iron Cage: The World Trade Organisation, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the South. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, Vol. 11, No. 1.

Friday 13 March

Chandrasekhar, C. P., Ghosh, J., and Das, D. (2023) *Paying with Austerity: The Debt Crisis and Restructuring in Sri Lanka*, Working Paper Series No. 590, Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Week 8 – State-capital relations

Wednesday 18 March

Ong, A. (2000) 'Graduated sovereignty in South-East Asia', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 14:4, 55-75

TBD

Friday 20 March

Ebner, N. (2024). From Paso del Norte to the Borderplex: **Labor Devaluation**, Bordering, and the Remaking of Uneven Development in the US–Mexico Borderlands. *Economic Geography*, 100(4), 351–376.

Llavero-Pasquina, M. (2025) 'Driving ecologically unequal exchange: A global analysis of multinational corporations' role in environmental conflicts', *Global Environmental Change*.

Week 9 – Global commodity chains, global value chains, global production networks

Wednesday 25 March

Bair, J. (2005) 'Global capitalism and commodity chains: Looking back, looking forward', *Competition & Change*, 9(2): 153-180.

McGrath, S. (2018). Dis/articulations and the interrogation of development in GPN research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 42(4), 509-528.

Friday 27 March

Tsing, A. (2009) 'Supply Chains and the Human Condition', *Rethinking Marxism*, 21:2, 148-176

- SPRING BREAK -

Week 10 – Globalized production, racialization, and workers

Wednesday 8 April

Raj, G. (2026) 'Exploring the Occurrence and Consequences of Racism/Racial Discrimination in Global Value Chains in the Current International Economy', *Rassismusforschung III: Rassismus in Strukturen und Praxisfeldern*, [transcript].

Friday 10 April

Bertana A. and Gaytán M.S. (2025) Racialized downgrading and upgrading: Dis/articulation and the Fijian kava commodity chain. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 57(1): 22–39.

Majumder, S. (2025) 'Backward geographies': Contested lives and livelihoods in the tea plantation enclaves of South Asia. *Area*. (WORK)

Week 11 – Presentations

Wednesday 15 April & Friday 17 April

Week 12 – Globalized production, work, and agriculture

Wednesday 22 April

Meagher, K. (2019) Working in chains: African informal workers and global value chains. *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 8(1–2): 64–92.

Friday 24 April

Hughes, A., Cheryl, M., and David, B. (2015) 'Postcolonial perspectives on global production networks: insights from Flower Valley in South Africa', *Environment and planning A* 47(2): 249–266.

Iddrisu, A. Y., Ouma, S., & Yaro, J. A. (2022). When agricultural commercialization fails: 'Re-visiting' value-chain agriculture and its ruins in northern Ghana. *Globalizations*, 1–21.

Week 13 – Frontiers and futures

Wednesday 29 April

Fouksman, E. (2021) 'Defending the wage: visions of work and distribution in Namibia' (Chapter 12), *Beyond the Wage: Ordinary Work in Diverse Economies*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Ouma, S. (2024) 'Africapitalism' (Chapter 36), *Handbook of African economic development*, Edward Elgar.

Friday 1 May (holiday)

Week 14 – Wrapping-up

Wednesday 6 May

Patel, K. (2020) Race and a decolonial turn in development studies. *Third World Quarterly* 41(9): 1463–1475.

TBD

Friday 8 May

TBD