Historical Political Economy

Graduate School of Economics University of Tokyo

Fall 2023–Winter 2024

Instructor information

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Course information

Class meets: Wednesday, 13:00–14:45 Class location: Int'l. Acad. Rsch. #513 Course website on ITC-LMS

Course Statement

This graduate seminar considers Historical Political Economy (HPE) as a burgeoning scholarly discipline. HPE is the study of how political and economic actors have shaped institutions and vice versa, in the past or over time (Jenkins and Rubin 2024). It sits at the intersection of history, political science, and economics. The emphasis is on the *historical* contexts of issues under study upon constructing a conceptual framework as well as on the explicit use of *social scientific methods* upon adducing evidence to evaluate it. Over the past decade, the scholarly significance of HPE has been increasingly recognized not just through occasional workshops but also with the launching of a journal that bears the namesake, the *Journal of Historical Political Economy* (February 2021) as well as of a collection of knowledge in *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy* (February 2024).

The class explores major works in HPE in two ways. First, it tackles two dimensions of the scholarly endeavor that make the field distinct from its origin fields. The first part of the class focuses on the concept of "persistence" in behavior and institutions and the political-economy "mechanisms" behind it. Second, the class takes up key topics of the literature in the rest of the course. The main theme is the state, where topics include state capacity, its evolution and (often *longue-durée*) consequences such as land reform, slavery, religion, religious conflict, censorship, colonialism, and ethnicity. The readings are drawn not only from those now considered to be *loci classici* but also from the cutting-edge. These aim to shed a new light on the conventional understanding of well-known historical events, which, in turn, advances the scholarly knowledge of how historical forces shape the political and economic contexts today.

Grades

Grades are based on two assignments and class participation.

- Assignments (30% for #1, 40% for #2):
 - 1. Assignment 1 due Week 8, November 22, 2023
 - 2. Assignment 2 due Week 16, January 24, 2024
- Participation (30%): ongoing

Assignment 1

The goal of this assignment is **to take mechanisms seriously**. As Gailmard (2021) and Abad and Maurer (2021) point out, the cutting-edge in the current literature of HPE is to take mechanisms seriously—or to put a greater emphasis on the "history" pillar of HPE (See Acemoglu et al. (2021) and Giuliano and Nunn (2021), both listed in the optional readings on Week 3, for recent attempts.) This assignment asks you to take up the torch and put it in practice yourself.

The formatting requirements are as follows:

- Minimum 8 pages long, double-spaced, one-inch margin all sides
- Times New Roman, 12-point font
- Conventional bibliographical rules

In this assignment, you will choose one of the following exercises: (1) "finding a mechanism" or (2) "finding persistence." In a review essay by Abad and Maurer (2021), these are two lacunae in recent scholarship (we will discuss this more in the first weeks of the course). You undertake one of these exercises to contribute to the literature. For this assignment, you must first choose one empirical paper, preferably outside the required readings. You cannot choose the main reading assignment for Week 3. We will discuss in class how to choose a paper.

You must address the following basics before moving on to either exercise:

- 1. Define the outcome variable (call it *Y*) and the main explanatory variable (call it *D*);
- 2. Describe the relationship between *D* and *Y*;
- 3. Define the unit of analysis (e.g., individuals, firms, countries, within-country units such as cities);
- 4. Identify *D* and *Y* in proxies (e.g., GDP per capita as a proxy for contemporary economic performance on the country level);
- 5. Discuss the purported mechanism ("finding a mechanism") or the purported trend of persistence ("finding persistence");
- 6. then Address the issues below.

Exercise 1: "Finding a mechanism"

In this exercise, you will go find a mechanism in the paper of your choice, where one is purported to be lacking (à la Abad and Maurer [2021]). Consider these questions upon making a mechanism: What is the author's (or authors') claim about the mechanism? What is the assumption underlying the claim? How are the authors supposed to substantiate the mechanism, by words (qualitative evidence) and/or by numbers (quantitative evidence)? How do you assess the claim? If you are to find a mechanism, what kind of evidence—qualitative and/or quantitative—would constitute as a mechanism? Can you find data for it in the public domain? How strong or convincing does the data look? If you cannot find evidence that proxies the mechanism, what does that imply for the strength of the paper's claim?

Exercise 2: "Finding persistence"

In this exercise, you will go find persistence in the paper of your choice, where one is purported to be lacking (à la Abad and Maurer [2021]). Simply put, persistence means that the relationship between *D* and *Y* remains largely unchanged over time. Consider these questions upon making persistence: What is the author's (or authors') claim about persistence? What is the assumption that makes the claim plausible? If you are to construct persistence, what kind of evidence—qualitative and/or quantitative—would constitute as persistence? Can you find data for it in the public domain? How strong or convincing does the data look? If you cannot find evidence that proxies persistence, what does that imply for the strength of the paper's claim?

Assignment 2

In this assignment, you will choose one of the three options below both to reflect what you have learned in the course and to engage in the HPE literature more fully. These options are:

- 1. A literature review / A debate on a prominent empirical paper (10–12 pages)
- 2. A research proposal (15–20 pages)
- 3. A full paper (20–30 pages)

You are free to choose any one, but I intend the review option primarily for the undergraduates and the rest for the graduate students. Those who wish to work in HPE for their dissertation are strongly encouraged to write a full paper.

The literature review / The debate

The literature review option requires that you survey a topic or a question from recent research. One way to do so is to address a question that has not been surveyed. Another is to take up a topic that has gotten reviewed and update it by studying major works following the last major survey. Economics and political science regularly publish survey-type articles in such outlets as:

- Journal of Economic Perspectives
- Journal of Economic Literature
- Annual Review of Economics
- Annual Review of Political Science

(See also the recommended edited volumes below for HPE-specific topics).

The main task of this exercise is to identify gaps in knowledge—questions that have not been *empirically* addressed—in the literature, which are raised and discussed in articles of these journals. *The* critical point is to come up with a question that is feasible: Empirical questions like "Why are some countries poor while others rich?" have a lot of gaps in knowledge but too broad for a student to handle in a semester. Find a more specific question or a topic within those question. Hints also come from working papers. Since unpublished works (almost by definition) address hitherto under-explored questions, they should be of great help in allowing you to find topics and identify gaps. Be sure to include as many working papers in the review as possible.

Alternatively, you can take the **debate** option. The main task is to find a work that is/was under a scholarly debate and offer a critical reappraisal. A prominent one is over Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001), "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review* (open access). See the published version of the critique by Albouy (2012) and the response by the authors (2012). A recent one in political science includes the one over Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2018), *Deep Roots: How Slavery Shapes Southern Politics* (Princeton), whose operating assumption is under scrutiny by Bateman and Schickler (2023), "Deeper Roots: Historical Causal Inference and the Political Legacy of Slavery," *Journal of Historical Political Economy*.

See the above journals for other ongoing debates. Please consult me *before* deciding what to study.

The research proposal

The research proposal is one that is executable. First, it must start with a motivating question that has not been widely investigated (call it an empirical puzzle). It must also be grounded in sound knowledge in the relevant literature and quantifiable with some variation. This will be the outcome variable (Y). Your main task is to come up with a plan about how to go about explaining this variation. Second, you identify an explanatory variable (D) that could explain the outcome variation, which allows you to construct a hypothesis and a possible channel through which $D \rightarrow Y$. Third, you must find data for the two variables. The proposal should report the variation in a format that is easily interpretable—that is, in a table (e.g., a summary statistics) or in a figure. The latter is highly recommended, because visualization allows any outliers or sources of hypothesis to pop out. Be sure to be able to use maps, histograms, barplots, or other ways to summarize the data. Fourth, you should undertake an exploratory data analysis by reporting, for instance, a time-series plot or a scatterplot to assess the relationship between D and Y. If possible, collect some data on potential covariates. Finally, be sure to discuss the plausibility of your preferred hypothesis and some endogeneity concerns.

Data sources can be those that are publicly accessible. If you are building an original data set and want to use it for this assignment, please consult me.

Securing data files can sometimes take far more time than you imagine. This includes a case in which you ask a scholar for a data set and s/he does not respond immediately. The key to success is to start early.

The full paper

You will write the first draft of a journal-length empirical paper (roughly 8,000–10,000 words). The ultimate goal here is to publish it in a peer-reviewed journal. Be sure to follow the structure of published papers in top journals. If you at least consider taking this option, please consult me early in the semester for guidance. The key to success is to start early.

Academic Conduct and Plagiarism

Under no circumstances will cheating and/or plagiarism be tolerated. A suspected instance will be immediately examined and necessary disciplinary actions may ensue. It is your duty to abide sincerely and faithfully by the university's policy on academic honesty and conduct.

Recommended Books and Edited Volumes (available for view via one's UTokyo Account)

- Bisin, Alberto, and Giovanni Federico, eds. 2021. *The Handbook of Historical Economics*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press.
- Jenkins, Jeffery A., and Jared Rubin, eds. 2024. *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy*. New York. Oxford University Press.

Course Schedule

All readings are available on ITC-LMS. I reserve the right to add or change the reading assignments, with announcement, as noteworthy publications and working papers come to our attention. All readings are required unless otherwise noted.

Week 1 (Oct. 4). Overview of Historical Political Economy (HPE)

- Jenkins, Jeffery A., and Jared Rubin. 2024. "Historical Political Economy: What Is It?" *Oxford Handbook of HPE*.
 - DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197618608.013.1.
- Charnysh, Volha, Eugene Finkel, and Scott Gehlbach. 2023. "Historical Political Economy: Past, Present, and Future." *Annual Review of Political Science* 26: 175–91. (Open access)
- Gailmard, Sean. 2021. "Theory, History, and Political Economy." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 69–104.

Optional further readings:

- Møller, Jørgen. 2021. "Reading History Forward." PS: Political Science & Politics 54(2): 249–53.
- Nunn, Nathan. 2021. "History as Evolution." In Alberto Bisin and Giovanni Federico, eds. *The Hand-book of Historical Economics*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, pp. 41–91.

In addition, the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Historical Political Economy* constitutes, collectively, a "mission statement" of HPE as a field. The table of content is as follows:

- Dippel, Christian, and Bryan Leonard. 2021. "Not-so-Natural Experiments in History." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 1–30.
- Abad, Leticia Arroyo, and Noel Maurer. 2021. "History Never Really Says Goodbye: A Critical Review of the Persistence Literature." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 31–68.

- Gailmard, Sean. 2021. "Theory, History, and Political Economy." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 69–104.
- Dennison, Tracy. 2021. "Context is Everything: The Problem of History in Quantitative Social Science." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 105–26.
- Cirone, Alexandra, and Arthur Spirling. 2021. "Turning History into Data: Data Collection, Measurement, and Inference in HPE." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 127–54.

Week 2 (Oct. 11). Historical Persistence

- Cirone, Alexandra, and Thomas B. Pepinsky. 2022. "Historical Persistence." *Annual Review of Political Science* 25: 241–59. (Open access)
- Abad, Leticia Arroyo, and Noel Maurer. 2021. "History Never Really Says Goodbye: A Critical Review of the Persistence Literature." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1(1): 31–68.

Optional further readings:

- Acharya, Avidit, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. 2024. "Historical Persistence." *Oxford Handbook of HPE*.
 - DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197618608.013.7.
- Gerring, John. 2010. "Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But..." Comparative Political Studies 43(11): 1499–1526.
- Page, Scott E. 2006. "Path Dependence." Quarterly Journal of Political Science 1(1): 87–115.
- Simpser, Alberto, Dan Slater, and Jason Wittenberg. 2018. "Dead But Not Gone: Contemporary Legacy of Communism, Imperialism, and Authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 419–39.
- Voth, Hans-Joachim. 2021. "Persistence—Myth and Mystery." In Alberto Bisin and Giovanni Federico, eds. *The Handbook of Historical Economics*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, pp. 243–67.

Week 3 (Oct. 18). Exploring Mechanisms: An Exercise

Readings:

- Callis, Anna, Thad Dunning, and Guadalupe Tuñón. 2024. "Causal Inference and Knowledge Accumulation in Historical Political Economy." Oxford Handbook of HPE.
 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197618608.013.4.
- Dell, Melissa. 2010. "The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita." Econometrica 78(6): 1863–903.
- Dell, Melissa. 2010. Data Appendix for "The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita."

Optional further readings:

- Acemoglu, Daron, Georgy Egorov, and Konstantin Sonin. 2021. "Institutional Change and Institutional Persistence." In Alberto Bisin and Giovanni Federico, eds. *The Handbook of Historical Economics*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, pp. 365–89.
- Giuliano, Paola, and Nathan Nunn. 2021. "Understanding Cultural Persistence and Change." *Review of Economic Studies* 88(4): 1541–81.

Week 4 (Oct. 25). State-building and State Capacity, Part I

Readings:

- Johnson, Noel D., and Mark Koyama. 2017. "States and Economic Growth: Capacity and Constraints." *Explorations in Economic History* 64: 1–20.
- Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Development, and Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529–45.
- Sánchez de la Sierra, Raúl. 2020. "On the Origins of the State: Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo." *Journal of Political Economy* 98(4): 529–45.

Optional further readings:

- Grzymała-Busse, Anna. 2020. "Beyond War and Contract: The Medieval and Religious Roots of the European State." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23: 19–36. (Open access)
- Grzymała-Busse, Anna. Forthcoming. "Tilly Goes to Church: The Religious and Medieval Roots of European State Fragmentation." *American Political Science Review*. (Open access)
- Dube, Oeindrila, and S.P. Harish. 2020. "Queens." Journal of Political Economy 128(7): 2579-652.
- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Paola Galano Toro, Luc Girardin, and Guy Schvitz. 2023. "War Did Make States: Revisiting the Bellicist Paradigm in Early Modern Europe." *International Organization* 77(2): 324–62. (Open access)

Week 5 (Nov. 1). No Class. The Economics Department follows the Monday schedule.

Week 6 (Nov. 8). State-building and State Capacity, Part II

Readings:

- Diamond, Jared. 1997. Guns, Germs, and Steel. New York: W.W. Norton. select chapters.
- Fernández-Villaverde, Jesús, Mark Koyama, Youhong Lin, and Tuan-Hwee Sng. 2023. "The Fractured-Land Hypothesis." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 138(2): 1173–231.

Optional further readings:

- Skarbek, David. 2011. "Governance and Prison Gangs." *American Political Science Review* 105(4): 702–16.
- Abramson, Scott F. 2017. "The Economic Origins of the Territorial State." *International Organization* 71(1): 97–130.

Week 7 (Nov. 15). Slavery

- Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(1): 139–76.
- Boxell, Levi. 2019. "Droughts, Conflict, and the African Slave Trade." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 47(4): 774–911.

Optional further readings:

- Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2010. "Why Is Africa Poor?" *Economic History of Developing Regions* 25(1): 21–50.
- Engerman, Stanley L., and Kenneth L. Sokoloff. October 2002. "Factor Endowments, Inequality, and Paths of Development among New World Regions." NBER Working Paper 9259.
- Nunn, Nathan, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. "The Slave Trades and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa." *American Economic Review* 101(7): 3221–252.
- Sharman, J.C. Forthcoming. "Something New out of Africa: States Made Slaves, Slaves Made States." *International Organization.*

DOI: 10.1017/S0020818323000073.

• Whatley, Warren C. 2018. "The Gun-Slave Hypothesis and the 18th Century British Slave Trade." *Explorations in Economic History* 67: 80–104.

Papers for reference, not meant for circulation

- Boxell, Levi, John T. Dalton, and Tin Cheuk Leung. June 2019. "The Slave Trade and Conflict in Africa, 1400–2000." (Labelled "non-working paper" on Boxell's website, suggesting that the project is dormant as of September 2023.)
- Derenoncourt, Ellora. August 2019. "Atlantic Slavery's Impact on European and British Economic Development."

Week 8 (Nov. 22). Exam Week

No Class; Assignment #1 Due

Week 9 (Nov. 29). Land Reform

Readings:

- Acemoglu, Daron, Davide Cantoni, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2011. "The Consequences of Radical Reform: The French Revolution." *American Economic Review* 101(7): 3286–307.
- Finley, Theresa, Raphaël Franck, and Noel D. Johnson. 2021. "The Effects of Land Redistribution: Evidence from the French Revolution." *Journal of Law and Economics* 64(2): 233–67.

Optional further readings:

- Deseau, Arnaud. March 2023. "Land Reform and Productivity: Evidence from the Dissolution of the French Monasteries." LIDAM Discussion Paper IRES 2023/09.
- Franck, Raphaël, and Stelios Michalopoulos. October 2017. "Emigration during the French Revolution: Consequences in the Short and Longue Durée." NBER Working Paper 23936.
- Heldring, Leander, James A. Robinson, and Sebastian Vollmer. 2021. "The Long-Run Impact of the Dissolution of the English Monasteries." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136(4): 2093–145.

Week 10 (Dec. 6). Religion

Readings:

- Bénabou, Roland, Davide Ticchi, and Andrea Vindigni. 2022. "Forbidden Fruits: The Political Economy of Science, Religion, and Growth." *Review of Economic Studies* 89(4): 357–71.
- Squicciarini, Mara P. 2020. "Devotion and Development: Religiosity, Education, and Economic Progress in Nineteenth-Century France." *American Economic Review* 110(11): 1785–832. (Open access)
- Chaney, Eric. March 2023. "Religion and the Rise and Fall of Islamic Science." Working Paper.

Optional further readings:

- Becker, Sascha O., Steven Pfaff, and Jared Rubin. 2016. "Causes and Consequences of the Protestant Reformation." *Explorations in Economic History* 62: 1–25.
- Blaydes, Lisa, and Eric Chaney. 2013. "The Feudal Revolution and Europe's Rise: Political Divergence of the Christian West and the Muslim World before 1500 CE." *American Political Science Review* 107(1): 16–34.
- Chaney, Eric. 2013. "Revolt on the Nile: Economic Shocks, Religion, and Political Power." *Econometrica* 81(5): 2033–53.
- Coşgel, Metin M., Thomas J. Miceli, and Jared Rubin. 2012. "The Political Economy of Mass Printing: Legitimacy, Revolt, and Technological Change in the Ottoman Empire." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 40(3): 357–71.

Week 11 (Dec. 13). Religion and Conflict

Readings:

- Becker, Sascha O., Sharun Mukand, and Ivan Yotzov. 2022. "Persecution, Pogroms and Genocide: A Conceptual Framework and New Evidence." Explorations in Economic History 86: 101471. (Open access)
- Anderson, Robert Warren, Noel D. Johnson, and Mark Koyama. 2015. "Jewish Persecutions and Weather Shocks: 1100–1800." *Economic Journal* 127(602): 924–58.
- Becker, Sascha O., and Luigi Pascali. 2019. "Religion, Division of Labor, and Conflict: Anti-Semitism in Germany over 600 Years." *American Economic Review* 109(5): 1764–804. (Open access)

Optional Further Readings:

- Cantoni, Davide, Jeremiah Dittmar, and Noam Yuchtman, 2018. "Religious Competition and Real-location: the Political Economy of Secularization in the Protestant Reformation." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133(4): 2037–96. (Open access)
- D'Acunto, Francesco, Marcel Prokopczuk, and Michael Weber. 2019. "Historical Antisemitism, Ethnic Specialization, and Financial Development." *Review of Economic Studies* 86(3): 1170–206.
- Grosfeld, Irena, Seyhun Orcan Sakalli, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. 2020. "Middleman Minorities and Ethnic Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms in the Russian Empire." Review of Economic Studies 87(1): 289–342. (Open access)
- Grosfeld, Irena, Alexander Rodnyansky, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. 2013. "Persistent Antimarket Culture: A Legacy of the Pale of Settlement after the Holocaust." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 5(3): 189–226.
- Jedwab, Remi, Noel D. Johnson, and Mark Koyama. 2019. "Negative Shocks and Mass Persecutions: Evidence from the Black Death." *Journal of Economic Growth* 24(4): 345–95.
- Yanagizawa-Drott, David. 2014. "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129(4): 1947–94.

Week 12 (Dec. 20). Persecution and its Long-run Consequences

Readings:

- Toews, Gerhard, and Pierre-Louis Vézina. May 2023. "Enemies of the People." Working Paper.
- Alesina, Alberto F., Marlon Seror, David Y. Yang, Yang You, and Weihong Zeng. March 2021. "Persistence Despite Revolutions." NBER Working Paper 9259.

Optional Further Readings:

- Acemoglu, Daron, Tarek A. Hasssan, and James A. Robinson. 2011. "Social Structure and Development: A Legacy of the Holocaust in Russia." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126(2): 895–946.
- Jedwab, Remi, Noel D. Johnson, and Mark Koyama. 2022. "The Economic Impact of the Black Death." *Journal of Economic Literature* 60(1): 132–78.
- Voigtländer, Nico, and Hans-Joachim Voth. 2012. "Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of the Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127(3): 1339–92. (Open access)

Week 13 (Dec. 27).

No Class; Happy Holidays!

Week 14 (Jan. 10). Censorship

Readings:

- Chen, Yuyu, and David Y. Yang. 2019. "The Impact of Media Censorship: 1984 or Brave New World?" *American Economic Review* 109(6): 2294–332. (Open access)
- Becker, Sascha O., Francisco J. Pino, and Jordi Vidal-Robert. April 2021. "Freedom of the Press? Catholic Censorship during the Counter-Reformation." CAGE Working Paper No. 562.

Week 15 (Jan. 17). Colonialism, Technology, and Ethnicity

Readings:

- Ali, Merima, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, Boqian Jiang, and Abdulaziz B. Shifa. 2019. "Colonial Legacy, State-building and the Salience of Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa." Economic Journal 129(619): 1048–81. (Open access)
- Pengl, Yannick I., Philip Roessler, and Valeria Rueda. 2022. "Cash Crops, Print Technologies, and the Politicization of Ethnicity in Africa." *American Political Science Review* 116(1): 181–99. (Open access)

Optional Further Readings:

- Cagé, Julia, and Valeria Rueda. 2016. "The Long-Term Effects of the Printing Press in sub-Saharan Africa." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 8(3): 69–99. (Open access)
- Woodberry, Robert D. 2012. "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 244–74.
- Woodberry, Robert D. November 2021. "The Religious Roots of the Printing Revolutions." Working Paper.

Week 16 (Jan. 24). Exam Week

No Class; Assignment #2 Due