

Carleton University – Winter 2026
Department of Political Science
<https://carleton.ca/polisci/>
PSCI 4104 (A)
International Development: theory and practice
W 6:05-8:55 pm
Location: Please confirm on Carleton Central
[Homepage - PSCI4104A Theory and Prac: Devl in Glob Sth \(SEM\) Winter 2026](#)

I. General Information

Instructor: Alex McDougall
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: alexmcougall@cunet.carleton.ca

II. Course Description

This course examines the political foundations of development and asks why some countries achieve sustained prosperity while others remain trapped in poverty or weak statehood. It traces major theoretical traditions on how institutions, state capacity, markets, and historical legacies shape economic performance and addresses how modernization efforts often fail when they ignore local realities. The material highlights the core political economy mechanisms behind growth, stagnation, and long-term institutional divergence. The course also analyzes how state strength, social order, and elite incentives determine development trajectories across regions. It looks at how war, patronage, rebellion, and informal governance structures influence the formation and resilience of states, and how external interventions such as foreign aid and education reform succeed or falter depending on political context. The material explores how development is fundamentally a political process driven by power, institutions, and the relationship between states and societies. This course is designed for advanced undergraduates with prior exposure to political science, international development, or comparative politics.

By the end of the course, students will be able to explain the major political economy theories of development and underdevelopment; assess how institutions, state capacity, and social order shape economic outcomes; evaluate competing explanations for why nations diverge over time; and analyze real-world cases using the concepts and frameworks covered in class and compare regional development experiences across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

III. Course Format

This seminar is offered online via Zoom and takes place synchronously. A typical seminar begins with a short opening discussion to link the week's readings to the broader themes of the course. We then move into two full student presentations, each consisting of a 20-minute analytical presentation followed by 10 minutes of questions and discussion. Presenters are expected to analyze and critique the material rather than summarize it.

After the presentations, several students deliver brief five-minute reactions based on their reading memos. These are concise analytical responses—no summaries or slides—that highlight what they agree or disagree with, what stands out, or what the argument implies. The remainder of the class is a deeper seminar discussion where we unpack concepts, debate interpretations, and connect ideas to real-world issues. We end with a short wrap-up reviewing the key takeaways and how the session links to the next week.

IV. Texts

There is no single required textbook. Required weekly readings consist of scholarly articles and book chapters available through Ares / Library Reserve or Brightspace. Additional recommended texts may be provided throughout the semester for students seeking deeper engagement with specific themes.

V. Evaluation at a Glance

Component	Weight	Due Date
Participation (weekly)	30%	Ongoing
Reading Presentation	25%	Scheduled date
Reaction Memo + Oral Reaction #1	10%	Scheduled date
Reaction Memo + Oral Reaction #2	10%	Scheduled date
Topic Paper	25%	Final paper due date (TBA)

VI. Evaluation in Detail

1. Participation – 30%

Participation is graded strictly. Students must attend every seminar, arrive on time, remain for the full class, and actively contribute to discussion. Participation requires demonstrating knowledge of the readings and engaging directly with arguments. Speaking live in class is mandatory; chat participation via Zoom may not count as participation. Passive attendance lowers the grade.

2. Reading Presentation – 25%

Each student gives one analytical presentation plus discussion. This is an analytical presentation followed by discussion. The presentation will focus on the topic covered by the reading. While it will cover the reading, we want your assessment of the topic more broadly, and for you to situate the reading in that context. When it comes to the reading – you should think about core arguments, It must identify core arguments, critique them, and situate them within the broader themes of the course. Summaries are insufficient; the task is to demonstrate understanding and provide a clear, defensible argument. The presentation should have visuals (e.g. a deck, ppt, google slides, prezi or similar software). Include three discussion questions for the class. Be prepared to be interrupted with questions and to answer them. Also be prepared to lead the discussion and to demonstrate mastery of the topic. Approximately 45 minutes will be allocated for each presentation, including discussion, although this is flexible and discussions may extend outside of this window at the instructor's discretion.

Scheduling: Presentations will be scheduled on the first day of class and finalized by the end of the first week. Topics will be assigned through a random draw. Students may trade or request a rescheduled slot during the first week only, at the discretion of the instructor; after that point, the schedule is fixed.

Missed presentation policy: Missing a presentation without valid documentation may result in a grade of zero. Rescheduling is not guaranteed, and available slots—if any—will be offered first to students with documented, legitimate absences.

3. Reaction Memos + Oral Reactions – 20% (10% each)

You will complete two short analytical memos and deliver corresponding in-class reactions. Each reaction is a concise, argument-driven engagement with the reading—what holds up, what fails, and why. You should state in your own words what you are reacting to, but this is not a summary; the goal is a focused critical comment. Speak in your own words—do not read. No visuals are needed. You must be prepared to speak to the class and answer questions about your comment. These are graded on clarity, insight, and preparedness. These are roughly 5 minutes long although it is expected there will be some extra time for debate/discussion. Usually the memo/reaction will follow the presentation on the topic although this might not always be the case. The grading is primarily based on the oral component. Completing the written product without presenting is not allowed.

Scheduling: Reaction dates will be scheduled in advance and finalized by the end of the first week. Limited trades or rescheduling requests may be considered during the first week at the instructor's discretion. After that point, the schedule is fixed.

Missed presentation policy: Missing a scheduled reaction without valid documentation may result in a grade of zero. Rescheduling is not guaranteed, and if an alternative slot becomes available, priority will be given to students who missed their reaction due to legitimate, documented reasons.

4. Topic Paper – 25%

Students will write a substantive paper responding to a pre-assigned question posted on brightspace. The paper must draw primarily on course materials and must also incorporate some outside research where appropriate, although this is primarily a topic paper and not a research paper. It should advance a clear, defensible argument, demonstrate mastery of the topic, and engage critically with the relevant scholarship rather than simply summarizing it. The paper will be evaluated on the strength and clarity of its thesis, the coherence and organization of the structure, the depth and quality of its engagement with the literature and empirical evidence, and the overall quality of the writing and analysis.

All papers must use Chicago-style in-text citations, including page numbers for any material quoted or paraphrased. Direct quotations should also include a corresponding footnote that provides the full citation information according to Chicago style. Students are expected to maintain consistent citation practices throughout and to demonstrate proper scholarly use of sources. Additional guidance regarding paper expectations, length, formatting, and the list of possible questions will be provided in class and posted on Brightspace.

VII Other class policies:

Use of Artificial Intelligence: Use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) is prohibited for any written product and may constitutes academic misconduct.

Reuse of Work: Students may **not** reuse work submitted for another course. All written and oral work must be original to this class.

Late Policy/make up work policy

- Late reaction memos may not always be accepted because they correspond to scheduled in-class reactions. Early rescheduling in some cases is possible.
- Late presentations are not possible; students must present on their assigned date unless documented emergency circumstances occur. While rescheduling is sometimes possible, a spot cannot be guaranteed.
- The topic paper: penalty of **2% per day** including weekends. Extensions require documented medical or serious personal circumstances.
- Participation: there are no make up marks for participation. If there is a legitimate absence, participation for that day is pro-rated.
- It's the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor in advance if there is a need to miss class or reschedule a presentation.

VIII Schedule and Reading List

January 7 – introduction to class

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 1

Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2012. Chapter 1

January 14 – Institutions

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 2 and 3

Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2012. Chapter 2,4 - Key point: focus on inclusive and extractive institutions, critical junctures, path dependence.

North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Chapter 1.

January 21 – states and development

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 2 and 3

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Thomas, M. A. *Govern Like Us: U.S. Expectations of Poor Countries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015, chapter 1, 2

January 28 – colonialism

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 4-5

Biggar, Nigel. *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning*. London: William Collins, 2023.. Chapter 1,2

Thomas, M. A. *Govern Like Us: U.S. Expectations of Poor Countries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015: Chapter 3,4

February 4 - State-led development

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 2 and 3

Thomas, M. A. *Govern Like Us: U.S. Expectations of Poor Countries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015: Chapter 5,6

Studwell, Joe. *How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region*. New York: Grove Press, 2013: Part II

February 11 – Liberalism and Development

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 11-12

Thomas, M. A. *Govern Like Us: U.S. Expectations of Poor Countries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015: Chapter 7,8

Studwell, Joe. *How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region*. New York: Grove Press, 2013: Part III

February 18 – markets and property rights

Easterly, William. *Violent Saviors: The West's Conquest of the Rest*. New York: Basic Books, 2025: Chapter 16,18

De Soto, Hernando. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic Books, 2000: Chapter 1, 7 (Bonus: Gill, "Of Property Rights, Civil Society, and Shampoo")

Zitelmann, Rainer. *How Nations Escape Poverty: Vietnam, Poland, and the Origins of Prosperity*. New York: Post Hill Press, 2024: Chapter 1, 2

(no class February 25 – Reading Week)

March 4 – human capital

Zitelmann, Rainer. *How Nations Escape Poverty: Vietnam, Poland, and the Origins of Prosperity*. New York: Post Hill Press, 2024: Chapter 3,4

Pritchett, Lant. *The Rebirth of Education: Schooling Ain't Learning*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2013., Chapter 1, 2

Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*. New York: Penguin Books, 2020: Chapter 1, 2

March 11 – violence and orders

Centeno, Miguel Angel. *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002. Chapter 1, 5

Reno, William. *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998. Chapter 1,2

Blattman, Christopher, et al. "Gang Rule." *Review of Economic Studies* 92.3 (2025).

March 18 – networks, elites

Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Pascal Daloz. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Oxford: James Currey; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. Chapter 1

Bates, Robert H. *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981. Chapter 1, 2

March 25 - rebellion and armed groups in development

Weinstein, Jeremy M. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Chapter 1,2

Sánchez de la Sierra, Raúl. "On the Origins of the State: Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo." *Journal of Political Economy* 128, no. 1 (2020): 32–74.

April 1 – peacebuilding

Autesserre, Séverine. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Ch 1-3.

Walter, Barbara F., Lise Morjé Howard, and V. Page Fortna. "The Extraordinary Relationship Between Peacekeeping and Peace." *British Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2021): 1705–1722.

April 8 – development without the state

Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Chapter 1,2

Leeson, Peter T. "Better Off Stateless." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 35.4 (2007): 689–710.

Political Science Course Outline Appendix

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

<https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC):

<https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS):

<https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389,

<https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>

Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic:

<https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating circumstances:

Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University.

Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

Survivors of Sexual Violence:

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services/>

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided

to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each terms Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#). Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)	B640
Loeb	
Registrar's Office (3500)	300 Tory
Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)	4 th floor
Library	
Academic Advising Centre (7850)	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre (6608)	501
Nideyinàn	
Career Services (6611)	401 Tory