

Politics of Policymaking in the Global South

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The Global South embodies a rich tapestry of histories, cultures, and political dynamics, shaped by the enduring legacies of colonialism, the trials of resource constraint, state-building and democratization, and the persistent inequities rooted in class, caste, gender, and ethnicity.

This course examines the unique challenges and opportunities of the Global South, integrating theoretical frameworks, historical analysis, and contemporary case studies to develop a thorough understanding of how the region confronts and navigates some of the most significant issues shaping its politics and policies. By analyzing diverse political and policy dynamics in the Global South, it encourages students to think globally and recognize interconnectedness across political systems.

Over seven weeks, we examine various challenges posed by institutional legacies of colonialism, the rise of populism, democratic backsliding, corruption, and political violence, while also highlighting innovative responses emerging from the Global South through contemporary case studies.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Grasp the relevance of colonial history and foundational political concepts in addressing contemporary policy challenges.
2. Analyze how structures, processes, actors, ideas, and institutions interact to influence policymaking.
3. Develop skills to construct arguments and present evidence effectively, both orally and in writing.
4. Gain proficiency in engaging with policy-relevant social science research.

Assignments and Grading

Participation (50%)	
Weekly Participation	20%
Discussion Memo and Presentation	30%
Policy Analysis (50%)	
Topic Memo	10%
Final Policy Presentation	40%

Weekly Participation (20%): Weekly participation grades (20%) will be based on attendance and meaningful contributions to weekly class discussions, with emphasis on both the quality and quantity of engagement.

Discussion Memo and Presentation (30%): At the start of the semester, I will randomly assign students as discussion leaders for different weeks. Discussion leaders will submit a 700-750 words **discussion memo** and a **collaborative presentation** in class (15-20 minutes).

The Discussion Memo (15 points) must include (a) a brief summary of readings (b) a reflective component where students connect the reading to their personal experiences, policy interests, or current events. Students are also encouraged to include visual elements like concept maps, charts, or infographics to represent the key arguments and relationships in the readings. Here's a [summary bingo card](#) - each square contains an element or task students must incorporate into their discussion memo. The goal is to encourage critical engagement with the text while making the activity fun and challenging. Incorporate at least **four squares** from the Bingo card into your summary. For an extra challenge, aim for a Bingo (a full row, column, or diagonal).

This presentation (15 points) must highlight (a) a concise overview of the readings and how they relate to the week's theme (b) at least one key insight (central debate, theoretical contribution, methodological innovation, research gap) or what you found most interesting or thought-provoking © Find a case or empirical evidence beyond the assigned readings to illustrate/critique the arguments (d) At least two discussion questions to prompt class discussion. You can sign up <<here>> If you're not the discussion leader for a week, you must still be prepared to participate in class for your ongoing participation grade.

Policy Memo (50%): You will write a policy report on a specific policy problem in a specific country of your choice. You will first submit a topic memo (10% of your grade), and then make a final presentation (40% of your grade). Altogether, the policy Analysis will account for **50%** of your final grade; we will proceed in stages to make the task less daunting and to improve the quality of the final product. You will receive detailed instructions on the policy memo on Courseworks.

Diversity and Inclusion

This course is designed with an awareness of the unequal impact of policy decisions on different socio-economic and racial groups, both within and across countries, and will consistently emphasize those inequities. Additionally, I strive to move beyond ethnocentric portrayals of developing countries by including, whenever possible, readings authored by scholars from the Global South, who are often underrepresented in academic and policy literature.

Attendance

The class will meet once a week. Attendance is mandatory, and class participation comprises a significant portion of the grade. Students are expected to do the readings before the class in order to participate in the discussion. But if you cannot come to class for some reason, please let me know *24 hours* in advance.

Office Hours

You can sign up for my office hours <<here>>

Academic Integrity

The School of International & Public Affairs does not tolerate cheating and/or plagiarism in any form. Those students who violate the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct will be subject to the Dean's Disciplinary Procedures. Please familiarize yourself with the proper methods of citation and attribution. The School provides some useful resources online; we strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these various styles before conducting your research. Cut and paste the following link into your browser to view the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct and to access useful resources on citation and attribution [here](#).

Students with Disabilities

SIPA is committed to ensuring that students registered with Columbia University's Disability Services (DS) receive the reasonable accommodations necessary for their full participation in their academic programs. If you have a DS-certified accommodation letter, I am happy to discuss your accommodations to ensure your needs are met. If you are neurodivergent and require specific accommodations to support your participation in class discussions or other aspects of the course, please feel free to reach out. If you have any additional questions, please contact SIPA's DS liaison at disability@sipa.columbia.edu or 212-854-8690.

Generative AI and Academic Integrity Policy

Intellectual honesty is essential for fair evaluation and academic integrity. All written assignments will go through Turnitin. While Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) may be used for brainstorming or refining your writing and presentation, you must disclose their use by identifying the tools and providing your full exchange (prompts and outputs). Be mindful that over-reliance on AI may hinder critical thinking and writing skills. A more detailed AI policy with FAQs would be available on the course website.

Week I: Democracy and Development

This week explores the relationship between democracy and development, examining whether democratic governance is essential for fostering economic growth, reducing inequality, and improving social outcomes. We will analyze theoretical arguments, empirical evidence, and case studies to evaluate the strengths and limitations of both democratic and authoritarian approaches to development. The discussion will also consider contextual factors such as state capacity, institutional quality, and historical legacies that influence developmental outcomes.

Patrick, S., & Huggins, A. (2023). [The Term “Global South” Is Surging. It Should Be Retired.](#)

Francis Fukuyama, [What is Development?](#) (Video)

Ross, M. (2006). Is democracy good for the poor?. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(4), 860-874

Mulligan, C. B., Gil, R., & Sala-i-Martin, X. (2004). Do democracies have different public policies than nondemocracies?. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(1), 51-74.

Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., & Berge, J. (2022). Does democracy matter?. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25(1), 357-375.

Recommended Audio/Video Resources:

Adam Przeworski (Dec 2023), [Crisis of Democracy](#) (In Pursuit of Development Podcast)

[TVEs and Poverty Reduction in China](#)

Larry Diamond, [Public Participation, Good Governance, Democracy and Development](#)

Case Study: South Korea

List-Jensen, A. S. (2008). Economic development and authoritarianism: A case study on the Korean developmental state.

Kim, W. (1998). [Democracy and economic development in South Korea and its application](#). *International Journal on Korean Studies*, 2.

Nilsson-Wright, J. (2022). Contested politics in South Korea: Democratic evolution, national identity and political partisanship. *Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs*.

Week 2: Populism

This week examines the rise of populism as a global political phenomenon, exploring its theoretical underpinnings, manifestations in the Global South, and impact on political polarization and governance. We begin by grounding our understanding in Urbinati's (2019) political theory of populism, which provides a framework for analyzing its characteristics and appeal. Theoretical discussions are further expanded with Roberts (2021), who provides a comparative perspective on populism and Abizadeh (2002), who highlights the tension between democratic inclusion and cultural boundaries, which populist leaders exploit to construct exclusionary national narratives. Davis *et al* (2025) addresses the two-way effects of populism on affective polarization, revealing how populist rhetoric and policies deepen societal divides while also being fueled by them. Moving into case studies, Kumral (2023) investigates the intersection of globalization, crisis, and right-wing populism in India and Turkey, while Shakil and Yilmaz (2021) explore how religion shapes populist narratives, focusing on Imran Khan's Islamist civilizationism in Pakistan.

Cas Muddle, [What is populism?](#) (Video)

Chantal Mouffe, [Left-wing Populism](#) (Video)

Abizadeh, A. (2002). Does liberal democracy presuppose a cultural nation? Four arguments. *American political science review*, 495-509.

Urbinati, N. (2019). Political theory of populism. *Annual review of political science*, 22(1), 111-127.

Roberts K. M. (2021). Populism and polarization in comparative perspective: Constitutive, spatial and institutional dimensions. *Government and Opposition*, 57(4), 680–702.

Why all populism is not bad populism.

Davis, B., Goodliffe, J., & Hawkins, K. (2025). The two-way effects of populism on affective polarization. *Comparative Political Studies*, 58(1), 122-154.

Case Study: Religion, Globalization and Populism

Kumral, S. (2023). Globalization, crisis and right-wing populists in the Global South: the cases of India and Turkey. *Globalizations*, 20(5), 752-781.

Shakil, K., & Yilmaz, I. (2021). Religion and populism in the Global South: Islamist civilizationism of Pakistan's Imran Khan. *Religions*, 12(9), 777.

Week 3: Corruption

This week delves into the multifaceted issue of corruption and its far-reaching effects on governance, development, and public trust. We will examine how corruption weakens democratic institutions, erodes state capacity, and deepens social inequalities, alongside a critical evaluation of its global definitions and measurements. Through theoretical frameworks and case studies from the Global South, we will uncover the diverse forms corruption takes, from petty bribery to grand political scandals. Additionally, we will analyze the role of AI and generative AI in addressing corruption by improving transparency and accountability, while also considering challenges like algorithmic bias and potential misuse. Students will assess the complex relationship between corruption, accountability, and governance in the context of these emerging technologies

Svensson, J. (2005). Eight questions about corruption. *Journal of economic perspectives*, 19(3), 19-42.

Adobor, H., & Yawson, R. (2023). The promise of artificial intelligence in combating public corruption in the emerging economies: A conceptual framework. *Science and Public Policy*, 50(3), 355-370.

Odilla, F. (2024). Unfairness in AI anti-corruption tools: Main drivers and consequences. *Minds and Machines*, 34(3), 28.

Mathew Stephenson, [Corruption and Anti-Corruption](#) (Harvard Law School) (Video)

Generative AI for anti-corruption and integrity in government:

Kreps, Sarah, and Doug Kriner. "How AI threatens democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 34, no. 4 (2023): 122-131.

[25 Corruption Scandals that Shook the World](#)

Köbis, N., Starke, C., & Rahwan, I. (2022). The promise and perils of using artificial intelligence to fight corruption. *Nature Machine Intelligence*, 4(5), 418-424.

Feldstein, Steven. "The road to digital unfreedom: How artificial intelligence is reshaping repression." *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 1 (2019): 40-52.

Fontes, Catarina, Ellen Hohma, Caitlin C. Corrigan, and Christoph Lütge. "AI-powered public surveillance systems: why we (might) need them and how we want them." *Technology in Society* 71 (2022): 102137.

Case Study

Gong, T., & Tu, W. (2022). Fighting corruption in China. *China Review*, 22(2), 1-19.
Bakken, B., & Wang, J. (2021). The changing forms of corruption in China. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 75(3), 247-265.

[Corruption and Democracy in Asia](#)

Week 4: Inclusive Policy Making

Contemporary approaches to development place individuals at the center of analysis often overlooking the importance of intersecting factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, and geographical location. However, group membership—such as caste, gender, race, and religion—affects individual life chances, including where they live, who they interact with, how they are treated, and the opportunities available to them. This week we discuss the concept of horizontal inequality: how can policymakers address inequality among groups rather than just individuals? Gender-inclusive approaches, gender mainstreaming, and affirmative action are vital for equitable access and justice for marginalized communities.

Stewart, F. (2005). Horizontal inequalities: A neglected dimension of development. In *Wider perspectives on global development* (pp. 101-135). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Frances Stewart, [Can Horizontal Inequalities be overcome?](#), UNHDR

True, J. (2003). Mainstreaming gender in global public policy. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5(3), 368-396. A [Primer on Gender Mainstreaming](#)

[Affirmative Action Under Siege](#)

[Laclau and Mouffe](#) (Video)

Case Study

Background: [World Bank Comparison of Affirmative Action in India and the US](#)

Bagde, S., Epple, D., & Taylor, L. (2016). Does affirmative action work? Caste, gender, college quality, and academic success in India. *American Economic Review*, 106(6), 1495-1521.

Bertrand, M., Hanna, R., & Mullainathan, S. (2010). Affirmative action in education: Evidence from engineering college admissions in India. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2), 16-29. (R2)

Week 5: Climate Justice and Inequality

This week focuses on climate justice as a critical lens for understanding the intersection of climate change, inequality, and governance. Drawing from **Fisher (2015)** and **Kashwan (2021, 2020)**, we will explore how historical and geographical inequities shape climate policies and exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly in the Global South. Recent debates, including the "heartbreaking" and widely criticized COP29 climate finance deal, highlight the persistent divide between developed and developing nations over climate responsibility and funding. **Ogunbode (2022)** frames climate justice as social justice, emphasizing the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities, while case studies such as **Standing (2023)** on ESG

bonds and **Boyd et al. (2021)** on the "loss and damage" agenda reveal strategies for integrating equity into global climate governance. Students will critically evaluate how public policy can address these disparities and advance justice-focused solutions.

[Climate change is a matter of justice – here's why](#)

[The “Worst COP” Concludes With a “Heartbreaking” Climate-Finance Deal](#)

[Developing Nations And Nonprofits Reject ‘Disaster’ COP29 Climate Deal](#)

[Developing nations blast \\$300 billion COP29 climate deal](#)

Fisher, S. (2015). The emerging geographies of climate justice. *The Geographical Journal*, 181(1), 73-82. Prakash Kashwan; Climate Justice in the Global North: An Introduction. *Case Studies in the Environment* 5 February 2021; 5 (1): 1125003.

Kashwan, P. (2020). [American environmentalism’s racist roots have shaped global thinking about conservation](#). *The Conversation*, 2.

Ogunbode, C. A. (2022). Climate justice is social justice in the Global South. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(11), 1443-1443.

Case Study

Standing, A. (2023). Sovereign ESG bonds in the global south.

Boyd, E., Chaffin, B. C., Dorkenoo, K., Jackson, G., Harrington, L., N'guetta, A., ... & Stuart-Smith, R. (2021). Loss and damage from climate change: A new climate justice agenda. *One Earth*, 4(10), 1365-1370.

Week 6: The Role of Civil Society in Governance

This week examines how protests and civic resistance drive policy change and challenge state repression. Htun and Weldon (2012) explore how grassroots activism combats violence against women globally, while O'Brien (2016) highlights "rightful resistance" as a tool for contesting authority within constrained systems. Fu and Göbel (2024) analyze how Chinese protesters use digital platforms to expose repression, and global data on state violence reveals patterns of protest and state response. The Chilean metro fare protests illustrate how localized grievances can escalate into transformative social movements. Students will evaluate the impacts of protests on governance, inequality, and policy reform, drawing on readings and case studies to assess their successes and risks.

Htun, M., & Weldon, S. L. (2012). The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), 548-569.

O'Brien, K. J. (2016). Rightful resistance revisited. In *Rural Politics in Contemporary China* (pp. 143-154). Routledge.

[Widespread Citizen Anger Continues, With Sources Multiplying](#)
[Interactive map reveals state-sanctioned violence against protesters worldwide](#)
[Protest matters: The effects of protests on economic redistribution](#)

Fu, D., & Göbel, C. (2024). Exposing State Repression: Digital Discursive Contention by Chinese Protestors. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 1-35.

Case Study

[How a \\$0.04 metro fare price hike sparked massive unrest in Chile](#)
[The Case of Chile \(20:41\)](#)

Week 7: Political Violence

This week examines the drivers of insurgency in the Global South and their far-reaching impacts on governance, political stability, and policymaking. We will explore why individuals and groups take up arms, focusing on grievances stemming from inequality, marginalization, weak state capacity, and historical legacies. Special attention will be given to how these insurgencies erode governance, influence policy priorities, and reshape the political landscape, often leading to militarization, reforms under pressure, and international interventions. Case studies will highlight the role of economic motivations, ideological struggles, and the internationalization of conflicts in sustaining or resolving insurgencies. Students will critically analyze the interplay between insurgent movements, state responses, and policy trajectories, assessing the long-term implications for governance and development.

Charles Tilly, *Why Men Rebel*. By Ted Robert Gurr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970. Pp. xi + 421. \$12.50), *Journal of Social History*, Volume 4, Issue 4, Summer 1971, Pages 416–420,

Collier, P., & Hoeffer, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford economic papers*, 56(4), 563-595.

[Horizontal Inequality and Conflict \(Stewart, ODI- Video\)](#)

Staniland P. States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders. *Perspectives on Politics*. 2012;10(2):243-264

Wood, E. J. (2001). The emotional benefits of insurgency in El Salvador. *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements*, 267-81.

Case Study: TBD