Oberlin College
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS

POLITICS 212: POLITICAL ECONOMY
OF DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA
Spring 2014
Professor Marc Blecher

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Class meets Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00-4:15, King 237
Politics 212 surveys and compares the relationships of politics and the economy in China, India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Among the various analytical themes we will weave together are:

§ the role of historical, pre-capitalist structures of political economy and class relations in shaping subsequent development;
§ state socialism vs. capitalism;
§ the effect of country size;
§ import-substitution strategies (emphasizing national self-reliance and active roles for the state in the economy) vs. neoliberalism and export-led development (emphasizing markets and integration with the world economy);
§ the plight of labor;
§ the plight of women;
§ the nature of the state and politics (state capacity and autonomy, the representative vs. the authoritarian state, interest representation [corporatism vs. pluralism], popular political movements, and “democratization”); and
§ the “Washington consensus” (emphasizing market-based globalization, Western-style “democratization”, and US global hegemony) vs. the “Beijing consensus” (emphasizing active state regulation of marketization, diversity of national political forms, and opposition to any global hegemony).

The course does not require previous study of economics. I will introduce in a non-technical way the economic concepts and theories needed to get at the issues that concern us. One goal of the course is to help you understand that matters of economics and political economy, which may appear dry and can take highly technical forms, are comprehensible to ordinary mortals; and, moreover, that they are flesh-and-blood issues of the profoundest significance to real people.

Before each class I expect you to complete readings that will cover the subject for the day. In class the material cannot be covered in anything approaching the fullness of what you need to know about it; ipso facto, classes cannot substitute for the reading. If you have not done the reading before class, you will not be able to get much out of that class session, and you will, unavoidably, feel lost.

We will be making intensive and regular use of Blackboard.
§ To encourage reflective reading, help you retain what you have read, and help me calibrate what we do in class, at least once each week I expect you to write on Blackboard a short response to questions about the works we are confronting that I will have posed in advance. (N.b. Read the questions carefully before you start the reading; that will help you read thoughtfully and efficiently, and avoid becoming a slave to the author.) You are also invited to comment there at any time on what others in the class have written. Start a debate! You may also use the blog to raise questions on which you would like help from me or from fellow students.
§ I use the blogs to promote your learning, not to evaluate it. I want you to think and write your blogs freely and creatively, and to take risks. Therefore I do not grade them. But because I view them as crucial to your learning, I do factor heavily into your final grade simply whether you have done them seriously and regularly.
§ Once each week you should respond in writing on the blog to questions that I will pose for each session. Specifically, those of you with surnames beginning A-M please do so by Tuesday morning at 9:00 AM, and those with surnames N-Z by 9:00 AM Thursday. The 9:00 deadline is firm because that’s when I start using your blogs
to prepare for class. In fact, the blog closes at 9:00 AM, both to enforce this deadline and also because I do not want students making up missed blogs later in the semester; the whole point of the blogs is to do them week-in, week-out, not subsequently in order to meet a requirement. That is, the blogs are about a continuous process, not end-products.

§ If you must miss or inadvertently have missed your appointed day, no problem: just post a reply for another day that week; if you miss a week, do two the following week. You may, of course, respond more than once each week if you like; the more often you do, the more you will learn!

§ Between 9:00 AM and class time on class days, prepare by taking a few moments to read what everyone has written. That too will help you grasp the material for the day.

You will also write two open-book, take-home essays of approximately 1,500 words (≈ 6 pages) each. The schedule can be found in the course outline below. These papers do require you to demonstrate command of the material, but they are oriented mainly toward developing your engagement with and analysis and interpretation of it. To give you an idea of what to expect and to help you orient your reading and thinking, starting on page 7 below you will find the essay questions used in the most recent offering of the course. You can expect many of the same issues to be treated this time around, probably with some of the same or similar questions.

I will evaluate your work according to the following weightings:

- Blog postings 40%
- Papers 30% each
- Active listening and participation in class A “fudge factor”

Please take careful note of these proportions. They reflect my conviction that the daily process of the course is even more important to your learning as the two papers you will write. In the past students who assumed that the papers were their only major responsibilities for the course have been unpleasantly surprised at the end of the semester.

☹ Americans spend five times as much on dog food as on college books. Politics 212 is doing its part to right our priorities. Please purchase:

- Marc Blecher, *China Against the Tides* (third edition only)
- Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India*
- Thomas Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*
- Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*
- T. J. Pempel, *Régime Shift*
- Elizabeth Perry, ed., *Putting Class in Its Place*
- Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*
- William Strunk and E. B. White, *Elements of Style*
- Jung-en Woo, *Race to the Swift*

In addition, if you can afford them, I recommend purchasing these books, from which we will be reading several chapters:

- Pranab Bardhan, *Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay*
- Barbara Entwistle and Gail E. Henderson, eds., *Re-Drawing Boundaries: Work, Households and Gender in China*

Only one or two copies of these books are available on reserve, so obviously you cannot rely on them for your regular reading.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

February 4: Introduction

February 6: Historical Roots of Indian Capitalism and Representative Politics

February 11: Institutionalization and Import Substitution in Nehruvian India
  Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India*, chapters 1-3.

February 13: Deinstitutionalization (Indira Gandhi & Sons) and Political Economy in India, 1966-91
  Corbridge and Harriss, chapters 4-5.
  Rudolphs, chapter 4 & 6-8.

February 18: Economic “Reform” in India, 1991 to the present
  Corbridge and Harriss, chapters 6-7.

February 20: Labor and Agrarian Politics in India
  Screen *Occupation: Millworker* (from Blackboard).
  Rudolphs, chapter 10, 12 & 13.

February 25: Gender in India: Social and Political Movements in India
  Corbridge and Harriss, chapters 8-9 and conclusion.

February 27: Historical Roots of Chinese Socialism
  Moore, chapters 4 and 9.
  Marc Blecher, *China Against the Tides*, chapter 1.

March 4: Maoist Political Economy
  Blecher, chapter 2 and pp. 129-145.

March 6: Structural Reform in China
  Blecher, chapter 3 and pp. 145-165.
  Screen *All Under Heaven* (from Blackboard).

**FIRST ESSAY TOPICS DISTRIBUTED.**
March 11: Industrial and Agrarian Politics in China
   Marc Blecher, “Hegemony and Workers’ Politics in China” (on Blackboard).

March 13: Gender in China
   Screen Small Happiness (from Blackboard).
   Blecher, pages 119-125.
   Entwisle and Henderson, eds., Re-drawing Boundaries, chapters 5-9.

March 18: India and China Compared
   Pranab Bardhan, Awakening Giants, chapters I, 2 and 10 and Afterword to the Paperback Edition

March 20: CLASS CANCELED: FIRST PAPER DUE

MARCH 21-31: SPRING BREAK

April 1: Historical Roots of Japanese Political Economy
   Moore, chapters 5 & 8.

April 3: The Japanese Postwar Conservative Régime
   Screen The Pacific Century (from Blackboard). You can stop when the film starts to mention Japanese influence in Thailand and the rest of SE Asia, though if you continue a bit further there is some interesting material about the electoral system. All in all it’ll take about an hour to watch — and a most worthwhile hour.

April 8: Japanese Crisis and Change in the 1990s
   Pempel, chapters 5-6.

April 10: Labor Politics in Japan
   Satoshi Kamata, Japan in the Passing Lane: An Insider’s Account of Life in a Japanese Auto Factory, chapter 8 (on Blackboard).
April 15: Political Economy in Taiwan from the Sixteenth Century through 1949

April 17: Political Economy in Modern Taiwan
   Gold, chapters 5-8.

April 22-24: State and Society in Taiwan: Labor Politics, Environmental Politics, Democratization
   Nai-teh Wu, "Class Identity without Class Consciousness? Working-Class Orientations in Taiwan", in Perry, ed., chapter 3.
   Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, "Changing Literary Images of Taiwan’s Working Class", in Perry, ed., chapter 4.

April 29-May 1: South Korean Political Economy
   Jung-en Woo, *Race to the Swift*

May 6-8: Course Conclusion
   I: State and Society in South Korea: Labor Politics, Democratization
      Dorothy J. Solinger, “Ending One-Party Dominance: Korea, Taiwan, Mexico” (on Blackboard).
      Charles Armstrong, “Contesting the Peninsula” (on Blackboard).

   II: Course Conclusion
      Li Xin, Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Michael Jacobsen, “Redefining the Beijing Consensus: Ten General Principles” (on Blackboard).

      **MAY 6: SECOND ESSAY TOPICS DISTRIBUTED.**

**MAY 16, 9:00 PM: SECOND ESSAYS DUE**
ESSAY QUESTIONS FROM
THE MOST RECENT OFFERING OF THE COURSE

FIRST ESSAY TOPICS

1. India experienced a peaceful transition to capitalism and parliamentary democracy, while China had a revolutionary transition to a state socialist economy. In what ways do the differences between the agrarian structures (i.e., village-level economic, social and political structures, landlord-peasant relationships, the configuration of the agrarian state and its relations with landed élites) and structures of the state and state-society relations of pre-1947 India and pre-1949 China help explain the differences in their pathways of transformation since the middle of the twentieth century? In what ways is such a mode of explanation limited by political or conjunctural factors?

2. In the Nehru period there was some interest in adopting Chinese measures of economic organization and development (Rudolphs, pp. 315-318). Going beyond this small issue and the limited discussion of it on those pages, account for this interest, discuss the historical, political and political-sociological reasons why the state never got serious about them, and speculate on how feasible and effective such a set of policies would have been in India had the state tried to pursue them more seriously. Then compare with China, analyzing what it had that India lacked that enabled it to undertake collectivization successfully.

3. The Rudolphs argue that successful economic development can be consistent with representative politics. Yet in China the decidedly illiberal state has been absolutely essential in mobilizing resources for and directing economic development. Discuss, paying equal attention to both cases.

4. Compare the processes, outcomes, and political aspects (including prerequisites and/or effects) of import-substitution industrialization in India and China.

5. The Rudolphs speak of political deinstitutionalization and the rise of demand politics. In China the state too has become increasingly self-serving and cut off from society, and popular political movements have captured the world’s attention. In each country, what do these political processes have to do with economics? Conclude with a comparison of India and China in these terms.

6. “A high capacity state requires a high level of autonomy from society. In turn, it is necessary for economic development.” — Kurt Remarque

Comment, comparing India and China.

7. In both India and China, industrial labor is politically weak. Compare the reasons why this is so, relating the issue to relevant wider aspects of each country’s political and economic system and policies.

8. Corbridge and Harriss speak of “passive revolution” as both a description and a prescription for political change in India. Compare it with Mao’s notion of “uninterrupted revolution” and/or the political reforms in China since 1978. Ground these political forms in the economic systems of each country at the time you are discussing.
9. Why has India been so much more hesitant about economic reform than China? What, if
anything, might this have to do with the way each country undertook ISI? With their
political systems (including, perhaps, régime types, mixes of demand and command
politics, state capacity, state autonomy)?
10. Women and men have benefited and suffered differently from economic development
in both India and China. Compare the two cases, showing in each case how the outcomes
result from aspects of the wider political economy.
11. Write out your own question, discuss it with me, and then respond to it in writing.

SECOND ESSAY TOPICS

1. In what ways do the similarities and differences between the pre-capitalist agrarian and
political structures of Japan and either pre-1947 India or pre-1949 China help explain
some of the salient similarities or differences in their subsequent pathways of
transformation? In what ways is such a mode of explanation limited?
2. Discuss the effects of imperialism on economic development in China and/or India on
the one hand and Taiwan and/or South Korea on the other.
3. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea have all possessed states with high capacity to mobilize
resources for economic development (though the situation in South Korea, and to some
extent Japan from 1945-1960, is somewhat complex and contradictory, as the state did
also not have the capacity to control demand politics). They have differed somewhat with
respect to the autonomy of the state from social forces, though all have sought to
exclude workers politically (albeit in different ways and with different levels of success),
and their relations with their bourgeoisies and farmers have differed. Choose one or at
most two cases, and compare the origins and nature of the state and state-society
relations with that in India or China. Then analyze the effects of all this on some
important aspects of economic development.
4. The Rudolphs argue that successful economic development can be consistent with
representative politics. Yet in Taiwan and South Korea decidedly illiberal states have been
absolutely essential in mobilizing resources for and directing economic development.
Discuss, paying equal attention to both cases and making reference to the Indian case.
5. Compare the conditions of possibility, political rationales, and specific means of
implementation of import substitution industrialization in India or China on the one hand
and Taiwan and/or South Korea on the other. What’s at stake here?
6. Evaluate the processes, problems and political implications of export led-development
in a large country like India and/or China on the basis of your studies of Japan and/or
Taiwan and/or South Korea.
7. Discuss the process and economic implications of democratization in Taiwan and/or
South Korea, and compare with India and Japan.
8. Discuss the prospects for “democratization” (i.e., the transition from authoritarian
politics to a representative, multi-party system) in China, based on your knowledge of
Taiwan and South Korea both historically and in more recent years.
9. Discuss the mechanisms that have subordinated labor in India or China on the one hand and Japan and/or Taiwan and/or South Korea on the other. Then address one or more of the following questions: Do different strategies of labor subordination have different political or economic effects on workers? On economic development? Do they have different implications for political change?

10. What are the underlying reasons why China and Taiwan were less affected than was Korea by the 1997 Asian financial crisis?

11. All the countries we studied this semester received foreign aid and investment at certain key stages in their development. Evaluate its effect on shaping the political economy of India and/or China on the one hand and Japan and/or Taiwan and/or Korea on the other. Pay attention to just what was affected (institutions, policies or both), how significant the effect was, and, if it fits with your approach, how it interacted with political nationalism (at the elite or mass levels or both). Place your response in the context of the other important factors shaping development that we have studied.

12. Write out your own question, discuss it with me, and then respond to it in writing.