

Prof. Yosh Halberstam  
Department of Economics  
University of Toronto  
Max Gluskin House, Room 311, 150 St. George St.  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11-1  
Email: yosh.halberstam@utoronto.ca

ECO3300/434H1S: POLITICAL ECONOMY  
WINTER 2015

Originally synonymous with the study of economics, today *political economy* typically refers to the investigation of how institutional design impacts the behavior of agents and subsequent outcomes. The field encompasses both macro and microeconomic topics, such as the distributional effects of tax policies and collective decision-making in legislative committees, respectively. The course will comprise a mix of lectures and student presentations on topics such as, voters, electoral competition and political agency. The lectures will develop a theoretical framework for analyzing subsequent empirical work that you will be required to discuss and present in the second half of the course. The objective of the course is to address and critically evaluate key concepts in the political economy literature.

CLASS TIME AND LOCATION:

Thursdays 2-4pm, SS 1080

TEXTBOOK:

*Political Economics: Explaining Economic Policy*, by T. Persson and G. Tabellini, MIT Press.

EVALUATION:

Problem sets (2) - 20%

Midterm (1) - 30%

Presentation (1) - 25%

Referee reports (3) - 15%

Attendance and participation - 10%

PROBLEM SETS:

There will be two problem sets that address the material covered in the lectures (i.e., the first half of the course, until reading week). The goal of the problems is to help you internalize some of the concepts and theoretical results we will address.

MIDTERM:

There will be a midterm in class on week 6. The midterm will cover the material we address until then and will closely resemble the problem sets.

PRESENTATION:

I will provide topics from which students can choose a paper for presentation. Following reading week, each meeting will be dedicated to student presentations. The idea is for students who choose the same topic to each pick a paper that is linked to the others. You will be expected to present your paper with reference to the other papers presented by your topic group. The presentation should be approximately twenty minutes

(excluding Q&A). Your evaluation on this portion of the task will be a function of the degree of cohesion among presentations by the topic group. Therefore, I encourage you to work together to streamline your presentations. Each group is required to meet with me (at least once) one week before your scheduled presentation to present a draft of your slides and discuss your strategy.

REFEREE REPORTS:

For each presentation, three students (ideally from a different topic group) are required to write a referee report (approximately 500 words) that highlights specific shortcomings of the paper. These reports should briefly summarize the main contribution and results of the paper and pose several critical points to raise in class. The response papers are due in class before the presentation. The papers are meant to foster a fruitful class discussion and train you in critically evaluating research papers.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

This class is set up as a seminar and works best if students are engaged in the material assigned and discussed in class. You will be expected to contribute to the discussions and read the papers chosen to be presented in class ahead of time (whether or not you are writing a report). Your evaluation will be based on the quality of your discussion and contribution to foster dialogue in class that benefits all participants.