

# **INTA 3303 Syllabus**

Political Economy of Development

Fall Semester, 2026

## **Instructor Information**

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**Instructor:** Johnathan Guy

## **General Course Information**

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### **Description**

This course surveys the political economy of development — a vast field with multiple rich intellectual traditions and no shortage of contested terrain. Drawing on scholarship from political science, economics, sociology, and allied fields, we will examine the economic arrangements that have produced development across the world and the political dynamics that underlie them, with particular attention to the experiences of countries in the Global South. We begin with foundational debates about what development is and the contested theoretical paradigms that have sought to explain it. We then turn to the political underpinnings of developmental outcomes before examining a set of specialized topics including social welfare, identity, inequality, natural resources, and the environment.

The course is designed to cover significant ground deliberately, prioritizing breadth over depth. The goal is to equip students with a panoramic view of the field's major traditions, frameworks, and empirical puzzles — so that when you choose to specialize, you do so with clear eyes about what you are selecting and what you are setting aside. Students who leave this course knowing what questions to ask, which traditions to dig into, and what they do not yet know will have gotten exactly what it offers.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe the major theoretical traditions in the political economy of development and their core assumptions, claims, and points of disagreement.
- Explain how political and institutional factors shape economic development, with reference to cases drawn primarily from the Global South.

- Critically evaluate competing explanations for developmental outcomes, identifying the strengths and limitations of different analytical frameworks.
- Situate contemporary development debates within their historical and intellectual context.
- Apply theoretical frameworks from the field to analyze and address contemporary development challenges.
- Identify productive areas for further specialization within the field based on your own interests and questions.

### Required Course Materials

There is no required textbook. Instead, we will make extensive use of electronic journal articles and book excerpts. To access electronic journal articles through the library website:

- Go to the Library Home Page (<http://www.library.gatech.edu>);
- Click on ‘eJournals’ on the left-hand side (under ‘research tools’);
- Type the name of the journal in the search box;
- Select the database option that includes the appropriate issue of the journal;
- Browse the journal to the appropriate volume and issue

I will upload PDFs of the required readings to Canvas whenever possible for convenience.

### Grading Policy:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Response Papers	Short papers (2-page, double-spaced), 7 weeks of your choice	20%
Participation	Continuous	20%
Discussion Lead	Lead/Co-Lead the discussion of course readings twice during the semester (Schedule per Sign-Up Sheet)	10%
Final Paper	Capstone project, depends on degree track (see below)	50%

Final course grades are awarded on a scale of A-F with no +/- grades permitted.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>A</b>	90-100%
<b>B</b>	80-89%

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<b>C</b>	70-79%
<b>D</b>	60-69%
<b>F</b>	0-59%

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## **Description of Graded Components**

### **Response Papers [20%]**

Students will submit a response paper (via Canvas) for seven weeks of their choosing, at the beginning of class for each chosen week. Each response paper should be two pages double-spaced and should engage critically with the assigned readings for the relevant week. A strong response paper summarizes the readings, identifies points of tension or disagreement across them, and raises critical questions or observations about what the readings leave unresolved. Response papers will be graded on the following scale: 0 (not submitted or inadequate), √- (below expectations), √ (meets expectations), √+ (exceeds expectations).

### **Participation [20%]**

Active, substantive participation in seminar discussion is essential to the success of this course. You are expected to come to every class having completed all assigned readings and prepared to engage with them. Quality of participation matters more than quantity—a single well-developed observation grounded in the readings is worth more than frequent but superficial comments. Your participation grade will be assessed holistically at the end of the semester.

### **Discussion Lead [10%]**

Each student will serve as discussion lead (or co-lead) twice during the semester. As discussion lead, you are responsible for opening and sustaining discussion of the assigned readings for that week. You should: (a) briefly summarize the main argument and contribution of each reading; (b) identify points of tension, disagreement, or complementarity across the readings; and (c) prepare two to three questions to put to the class. You should aim to speak for five to seven minutes initially and then actively facilitate the discussion that follows. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the second week of class.

### **Final Paper [50%]**

The final paper asks you to demonstrate sustained engagement with the field of political economy of development. Requirements differ by degree track:

*Undergraduates* will write an analytical essay of 2,500-3,000 words. You may respond to a prompt provided by the instructor or propose a topic of your own, subject to instructor approval.

*MA students* will write a policy memo of 1,500-2,000 words addressed to a relevant government agency, international organization, or NGO. Your memo should identify a concrete development challenge, draw on course frameworks to diagnose it, and offer evidence-based recommendations.

*PhD students* will write a literature review of 6,000-10,000 words on a topic of their choosing, subject to instructor approval. Your literature review should map the major theoretical traditions and empirical debates in a defined area of the political economy of development literature, identify gaps or unresolved questions, and conclude with a discussion of promising directions for future research.

Proposed topics must be submitted for approval via email to me by Monday, November 2nd.

Further guidelines for each assignment will be posted on Canvas.

## Course Policies

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### **Attendance and/or Participation**

This is a seminar, and its success depends on your presence and engagement. You are expected to attend every class session having completed all assigned readings and prepared to contribute to discussion. More than one unexcused absence will affect your participation grade.

Excused absences include verified illness or emergency, participation in approved Institute activities, and religious observances. If you need to miss class for any of these reasons, please contact me as soon as possible — ideally before the absence.

Documentation may be requested. I understand that life does not always conform to the academic calendar, and I am happy to discuss unforeseen circumstances on a case by case basis. However, if you are scheduled to lead discussion on a day you miss without an excused absence, you will receive a zero for that component and it cannot be rescheduled.

If you must miss class, you are responsible for catching up on what you missed. I encourage you to connect with classmates and to review any materials posted on Canvas.

### **Academic Integrity**

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

### **Pre- &/or Co-Requisites**

Many of the required readings employ advanced techniques in statistics, econometrics and game theory. Previous training in these techniques will not be assumed and you will not be expected to grasp the nuances of the technical material. However, you will still be expected to engage with this type of material. Specifically, for any given reading, you must be able to evaluate the logic of the argument laid out in non-technical terms and must be able to discuss the merits and flaws of the measurement approach and research design employed to address the question at hand.

### **Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI**

All submitted work should reflect your own thinking and engagement with the material. Response papers must be completed without the use of generative AI tools, as the goal of these assignments is to develop your own analytical voice in relation to the readings. For the final paper, limited use of generative AI is permitted for tasks such as editing and proofreading, but not for generating ideas, analysis, or prose. Any use of AI tools must be disclosed in a brief footnote or appendix. Students are encouraged to discuss ideas and readings with one another. However, all written work must be your own. Collaboration on written assignments beyond the level of general discussion is not permitted.

### **Extensions and Late Assignments**

Late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day. Assignments submitted more than one week late will receive a zero. If you anticipate difficulty meeting a deadline, you are strongly encouraged to contact me at least 48 hours in advance — extensions requested proactively will be considered; extensions requested after the fact generally will not. Documentation may be requested in the case of illness or emergency. If you miss your scheduled discussion lead without an excused absence, you will receive a zero for that component and it cannot be rescheduled.

### **Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days**

During inclement weather or other cases where in-person instruction is not feasible, class will be held over Zoom. I will send out specific instructions over email and Canvas regarding Zoom access and policies.

### **Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom**

I understand that the electronic recording of notes will be important for class and so computers will be allowed in class. Please refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phone use is discouraged as it is rarely useful for anything in the course.

## Campus Resources for Students

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### **Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:**

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and information about advising can be found at [Success at Tech](#).

- Academic Support: Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at [success.gatech.edu/tutoring](http://success.gatech.edu/tutoring), email us at [tutoring@gatech.edu](mailto:tutoring@gatech.edu), or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

### **Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources:**

A list of resources for graduate students is given on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education](#) website. Specific information for [current graduate students](#) includes

- [Academic Resources](#) such as the Communications Center, Language Institute, Library, Catalog, Registrar, resources for conducting research, Advocacy and Conflict Resolution resources, and how to manage unexpected situations that may impact your academic performance;
- [Student Resources](#) such as Campus Services, Child Care/Family programs, Health & Wellness, Career Services, and the Student Resource Guide; and
- [Professional Development](#) such as the programming from the Career Center and other professional development resources and events”

### **Student Well-Being:**

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](http://student-resource-guide(gatech.edu))).