Overview. We consider contemporary comparative political economy and macroeconomics through the lens of the past decade and a half, in which advanced industrial economies experienced massive technological change, speculative bubbles, financial crises, prolonged recessions, and widening inequality, as well as renewed debate on the appropriate role of government in managing the business cycle. Emerging from this period, these countries face deep questions about the future of work in an era of automation, globalism in a time of xenophobia, and democracy under the rise of populism. Through discussion and papers on a mixture of popular and academic readings,
we tackle three key questions: What happened during the financial crisis, what political economic changes followed in its wake, and what’s next?

Prerequisites. No specific courses are required, but some exposure to American politics, comparative politics, and/or macroeconomics is helpful.

Office Hours. Mondays 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM and by appointment.


Academic Accommodations. To request academic accommodations due to disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz Hall, (206) 543-8924 (V/TTY). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires an academic accommodation, please present the letter to your instructor, and a suitable accommodation will be provided.

Academic Honesty. While each student is encouraged to seek help with challenging concepts or assignments, all assignments are each student’s responsibility, and should ultimately reflect each student’s own work. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing by the instructor on any assignment will receive a grade of X for the course and will be reported to the Dean’s office in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Course Requirements

Participation (25%) Students are expected to read required readings before class and participate in class discussions. Active participation based on careful reading is given substantial weight in the determination of final grades. On occasion, I may ask students to submit a discussion question by email for the next class, for participation credit. In addition, students submitting reaction papers at a given class meeting are required to meaningfully participate at least once during discussion at that meeting.

Reaction Papers (30%) For three pre-arranged class meetings, students will turn in a 2–3 page “reaction paper” addressing that day’s readings. While this paper should show understanding of the assigned selections, to receive full credit, students must so more than simply summarize arguments from the readings. A good reaction paper can take several forms: you might choose to (1) critique one or more readings closely; (2) high-
light questions raised by the readings or puzzles unresolved by them, (3) compare and contrast the arguments and findings of several readings, or (4) place the readings in a broader context, including earlier readings in the course. Reaction papers are due at the beginning of class; late papers will not be accepted.

Students may choose to re-write one reaction paper to improve their score. Rewrites should (1) substantially expand the original paper to a minimum of 5 pages, (2) go beyond the in-class discussion on the same topic, (3) incorporate improvements suggested by instructor feedback, and (4) are due within 3 weeks of the initial paper due date or by 31 May 2017 (whichever is sooner).

Final Paper (40%) Students will write a longer (approximately 10–12 page) paper drawing on the course readings to answer an assigned question. Papers that clearly develop an argument and support that argument with well-sourced and explained evidence will receive the highest marks. Papers that fail to make a clear argument, that provide only weak, poorly explained, or poorly sourced evidence, or that suffer from serious deficits in writing will be marked down accordingly. The final paper is due Wednesday, 7 June 2017 at 3 pm in the instructor’s box in the Department of Political Science main office (101 Gowen Hall).

Quiz (5%) On the second day of class, students will take a short quiz to assess background knowledge of political economy and to gauge pre-course views on the Great Recession. This will help calibrate our discussions and may provide some interesting comparative data by the end of the course. Every student who takes the quiz seriously will receive full credit.
Course texts

*Books recommended for purchase marked with a *. 


Other useful books for further reading


Course Outline

This is a reading and discussion intensive course. It is vital that all students – not just those writing reaction papers – come to each session having read the required material for that day. To help focus your reading, discussion questions will be posted in advance.

Part I: Introduction & background

Monday, 27 March 2017 · Course Introduction

Wednesday, 29 March 2017 · Contours of Change

Required: Eichengreen, Introduction.
          Galbraith, Prologue.
          Quiggin, Ch. 1.

Optional: Eichengreen, Ch. 1, 2, 3.

Part II: What was the crisis, and why did it happen?

Monday, 3 April 2017 · The economics of the financial crisis (1)

Required: Eichengreen, Ch. 4, 5, 11, 12, 13.
          Wolf, Ch. 4.

Optional: Eichengreen, Ch. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Wednesday, 5 April 2017 · The economics of the financial crisis (2)

Required: Blyth, Ch. 2.
          Rajan, Ch. 1.
          Reinhart & Rogoff, Ch. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

Optional: Ho, Ch. 1, 2, 5, 6.
          Quiggin, Ch. 2.

Monday, 10 April 2017 · The politics of the financial crisis (1)

Required: Eichengreen, Ch. 19, 21, 22.
          McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal, Introduction & Ch. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
Wednesday, 12 April 2017 · The politics of the financial crisis (2)

Required: Calomiris & Haber, Ch. 1, 2, 7, 8.
          Galbraith, Ch. 9.
          McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal, Ch. 6, 7.

Part III: Why has recovery been slow & uneven?

Monday, 17 April 2017 · Stimulus, austerity, and recovery in the US

Required: Pick at least three of the following authors
          Blyth, Ch. 1.
          Eichengreen, Ch. 20, 23.
          Galbraith, Ch. 10, 11.
          Quiggin, Ch. 6.
          Wolf, Ch. 1.

Optional: Eichengreen, Ch. 15, 16, 17, 18.

Wednesday, 19 April 2017 · The euro, austerity, and crisis in Europe (1)

Required: Blyth, Ch. 3, 4, 5, 6.
          Galbraith, Ch. 13.

Optional: Adolph, Ch. 2, 3.

Monday, 24 April 2017 · The euro, austerity, and crisis in Europe (2)

Required: Adolph, Ch. 10.
          Eichengreen, Ch. 6, 14, 24, 25, 26, Conclusion.
Part IV: Return to Normal? Or Brave New World?

Wednesday, 26 April 2017 · Automation, Skills, & Inequality


Galbraith, Ch. 8.

Goldin & Katz, Ch. 8, 9.


Monday, 1 May 2017 · Capital’s Return (1)

Required: Piketty, Introduction & Ch. 1, 2, 5, 6;
also read pp. 116–120 from Ch. 3 and pp. 146–155 from Ch. 4.

Wednesday, 3 May 2017 · Capital’s Return (2)

Required: Piketty, Ch. 7, 8, 9.

Monday, 8 May 2017 · Capital’s Return (3)

Required: Piketty, Ch. 10, 11, 12.

Wednesday, 10 May 2017 · Democratic Responsiveness and Economic Change (1)

Required: Crouch, all.

Monday, 15 May 2017 · Democratic Responsiveness and Economic Change (2)

McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal, Ch. 8.
Calomiris & Haber, pp. 500–506.
Jacobs & King, Ch. 1.

Wednesday, 17 May 2017 · Democratic Responsiveness and Economic Change (3)

*Required:* Müller, p. 1–60, 75–103.
Gest, Ch. 3.

Monday, 22 May 2017 · Searching for solutions to 21st century problems (1)

*Required:* Frase, p. 1–63, 144–150, and at least one of Ch 3, 4, or 5.
Gest, Ch. 9.

Wednesday, 24 May 2017 · Searching for solutions to 21st century problems (2)

*Required:* Blyth, Ch. 7.
Galbraith, Ch. 14.
Jacobs & King, Ch. 5.
Piketty, Ch. 14, 15.
*Optional:* Rajan, Ch. 8, 9.
Wolf, Ch. 6, 7, 8, 9, and Conclusion.

Monday, 29 May 2017 · NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY

Wednesday, 31 May 2017 · Searching for solutions to 21st century problems (3)