

HIstorical Political Economy - 3XX/4XX

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Course Overview

This course examines state formation, state building, power-sharing, succession, and regime changes in historical states. We will ask and try to answer seven main questions:

- How and why do states form?
- After states form, how do they consolidate and grow?
- How do states carry out decisions?
- How and why do rulers share power with others?
- How do states determine who takes power?
- What role do non-state institutions play in the governing actions of historical regimes?
- Why and how do regime types change over time?

For each question, we will learn theoretical arguments and models, and then consider evidence from three varying historical regimes: Ancient Egypt, Ancient/Medieval China, and Medieval England/Europe. You will then take the theoretical arguments and analyze them for a historical regime that you choose.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, you'll gain an understanding of the theoretical arguments and models underlying big questions about how states form, grow, make decisions, share power, and change. While the focus of the course is on historical regimes, the questions and theories apply to contemporary states writ large.

You'll gain some historical, political, and economic knowledge about Ancient Egypt, Ancient/Medieval China, and Medieval England/Europe, along with the historical regime of your choice. At the end of the course, you'll know enough bizarre facts to make someone on a first date say, "I need to go to the restroom." and then never come back.

Finally, you'll develop, workshop, write, revise, write, revise, and complete a final paper/report on a historical regime of your choice that evaluates the theories we discuss. The hope is that the rigor, design, and novelty of the final paper will easily translate into writing samples for graduate school or research-centric jobs.

Assessments

Each assignment point value translates into a percentage point of your final grade in the course. Assignments that can be late (e.g., paper meetings and the final paper), will lose a point for each day it is late.

Assignment	Point Value	Due Date
Participation	10	
Pre-Exam	1	Class 1
Paper Idea Meeting	2	Before Class 6
Paper Meeting After Mini Presentation	2	Before Class 18
Exam 1	15	Class 9
Exam 2	15	Class 24
Mini Presentation 1	2	Class 14
Mini Presentation 2	2	Class 21
Paper	36	Class 26
Final Exam	15	Final Exam Day
Total Points Available	100	

Participation

Please do the readings. I limited the number of pages you have to read for each class to below 35, with the exception of two classes. Your participation is based on 1) attending class, 2) actively participating in class discussion and activities, 3) the quality of your comments and engagement with activities, 4) adherence to the classroom technology policy, and 5) doing the readings (I can tell). For **Discussion and Activity Days**, please do the readings before class, but for **Lecture Days**, you can read them before or after class.

Emergencies happen. Missing one or two classes in the semester will not negatively impact your participation grade. However, chronic absenteeism will. Additionally, missing an exam or presentation day will mean you receive an automatic zero for that assignment. I do not offer makeups.

Paper Meetings

These meetings are for me to help you pick a historical state for your final paper. I am not an expert on all historical regimes. I'm not even an expert on the ones I study, but I can help direct you to articles, data, and other scholarly resources to help you write your paper and do your mini presentations.

Exams

Since the course is historical, you'll take exams the historical way: in-class, handwritten, closed-book, short answers and essays. The exams will cover the broad theoretical questions we will discuss in class and then the application of those theoretical concepts to the historical examples we discuss.

Mini Presentations

Your paper will take a historical regime and answer the seven big questions we cover in the course. The mini presentations allow you to get a head start on answering two of these questions. Each presentation should be two to four PowerPoint slides long and last no more than three minutes. Your presentation should make a claim about how your historical regime addresses the given big course question and provide some qualitative or empirical evidence to justify the claim. Practice before presenting. Practice. Practice. Practice.

Paper

For the paper, you'll choose a historical regime and answer each of the seven questions we cover in the course in the format of a think tank, government, or private sector report (see [here](#) and [here](#) for examples). For each big question, you should:

1. Engage with the theoretical models we've discussed in class and see if, when, and how they apply to your historical regime.
2. From engaging with the theories we discussed, make a claim about what a social scientist should observe in your historical regime.
3. Provide quantitative or qualitative evidence to evaluate your claim. And comment on the quality of evidence you provide.
 - At least three of your report sections must involve original quantitative or qualitative analysis.
 - At least one of your report sections must involve some type of original data collection.

The final paper should contain seven main sections (one for each question), an executive summary of the main themes synthesized across your seven sections, a concluding section, contain at least one visualization (either theoretical or empirical) for each main section, and be well designed (i.e., set color schemes, font schemes, table of contents, etc.).

AI and Your Final Paper

I support the use of generative artificial intelligence for finding academic sources (e.g., articles, books, monographs), identifying data, as a tool to support data collection, helping

you write code for analysis or figure generation, and helping you with spelling and grammar editing. I do not allow the use of generative artificial intelligence to write prose, perform data analysis, draw conclusions from data analysis, or autonomously generate figures. You are responsible for the content you produce in your final paper. I reserve the right to request data analysis and figure generation code or your original analysis files if you choose to analyze data and generate figures without code (e.g., you use Excel for data analysis or Canva to make figures). If I request your files and you fail to send me them within 24 hours, you will lose 15 points on your final paper.

Grading Scale

I do not round grades.

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D
Point Value	>93	93 - 90	89 - 87	86 - 84	83 - 80	79 - 77	76 - 74	73 - 70	<70

Classroom Technology Policies

Like taking our exams the historical way, we will also attend class the historical way: no laptops or phones. If you wish to take notes during discussion or lecture, it will be a great time to revisit your 3rd grade handwriting exercises. “But what about the readings, Mr. Erickson?” Take notes. Print them. At the very least, I recommend printing the readings for discussion and activity days or coming with detailed notes, as you can read lecture day material either before or after class. “But what about the environmental impact of printing?” Do not worry, I donate plenty to environmental charities to offset whatever environmental cost you all incur from remaining engaged in class.

For each instance I observe you using a phone or laptop (with the exception of the days that require laptops), I will deduct one participation point from your participation grade, which translates to one percentage point from your final grade.

Class Schedule and Readings

Class 1 - Lecture Day and Pre-Exam

How and why do states form?

Class 2 - Discussion Day

- Allen, Robert C., Mattia C. Bertazzini, and Leander Heldring. 2023. “The Economic Origins of Government.” *American Economic Review* 113(10): 2507–45. **Only the Literature section, pages 2513-2516.**
- Baumol, William J. 1952. “Welfare Economics and the Theory of the State.” In *The Encyclopedia of Public Choice*, Springer, 937–40.
- Olson, Mancur. 1993. “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development.” *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 567–76.

Class 3 - Lecture Day

Ancient Egypt

- Allen, Robert C. 1997. “Agriculture and the Origins of the State in Ancient Egypt.” *Explorations in Economic History* 34(2): 135–54.

Ancient/Medieval China

- Finer, Samuel Edward. 1997. *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: Ancient Monarchies and Empires*. Oxford University Press. **Only Section 1, pages 442 - 454.**

After states form, how do they consolidate and grow?

Class 4 - Discussion Day

- Tilly, Charles. 2017. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” In *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*, Routledge, 121–39.
- Garfias, Francisco, and Emily A. Sellars. 2022. “State Building in Historical Political Economy.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy*, Oxford University Press. **Pages 1 - 11 and Appendix Section 7.1.**

Class 5 - Lecture Day*Medieval England/Europe*

- Dincecco, Mark, and Massimiliano Gaetano Onorato. 2016. "Military Conflict and the Rise of Urban Europe." *Journal of Economic Growth* 21: 259–82. **Pages 259 -272 and 277 - 280.**
- Blaydes, Lisa, and Christopher Paik. 2016. "The Impact of Holy Land Crusades on State Formation: War Mobilization, Trade Integration, and Political Development in Medieval Europe." *International Organization* 70(3): 551–86. **Pages 551 - 565 and 581 - 583.**

Class 6 - Lecture Day*Ancient/Medieval China*

- Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*. Princeton University Press. **Chapter 6.**

Ancient Egypt

- Mayoral, Laura, and Ola Olsson. 2024. "Floods, Droughts, and Environmental Circumscription in Early State Development: The Case of Ancient Egypt." *Journal of Economic Growth*: 1–35.

How do states carry out decisions?**Class 7 - Activity and Lecture Day**

- Dincecco, Mark, and Yuhua Wang. 2022. "State Capacity in Historical Political Economy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy*, Oxford University Press.

Please bring your laptops to class today.

Class 8 - Lecture Day*Medieval England*

- Ormrod, W. M. 1999. "England in the Middle Ages." In *The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe c. 1200-1815*, Clarendon Press. **PDF pages 1-9.**

Ancient/Medieval China

- Wang, Yuhua. 2022. *The Rise and Fall of Imperial China: The Social Origins of State Development*. Princeton University Press. **Section 2.4, pages 46-51.**

Ancient Egypt

- Fagbore, Adam Simon. 2023. "Punishment, Patronage, and the Revenue Extraction Process in Pharaonic Egypt." *International Review of Social History* 68(S31): 53–71.

Class 9 - Exam**Class 10 - Activity Day**

Please bring your laptops to class today.

Class 11 - Discussion Day

- Gibson, Clark C., Krister Andersson, Elinor Ostrom, and Sujai Shivakumar. 2005. *The Samaritan's Dilemma: The Political Economy of Development Aid*. Oxford University Press. **Pages 90 to 95.**
- Egorov, Georgy, and Konstantin Sonin. 2011. "Dictators and Their Viziers: Endogenizing the Loyalty–Competence Trade-Off." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 9(5): 903–30. **Pages 903 - 909 and 921 - 922.**

Class 12 - Activity and Lecture Day*Medieval England/Europe*

- Blaydes, Lisa, and Eric Chaney. 2013. "The Feudal Revolution and Europe's Rise: Political Divergence of the Christian West and the Muslim World Before 1500 CE." *American Political Science Review* 107(1): 16–34.

Class 13 - Lecture Day*Ancient Egypt*

- Finer, Samuel Edward. 1997. *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: Ancient Monarchies and Empires*. Oxford University Press. **Pages 148 - 167 and 188 - 203.**

Ancient/Medieval China

- Chen, Joy, Erik H. Wang, and Xiaoming Zhang. *Forthcoming*. "From Powerholders to Stakeholders: State-Building with Elite Compensation in Early Medieval China." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Class 14 - Student Mini Presentation on State Capacity**How and why do rulers share power with others?****Class 15 - Activity and Lecture Day**

- Meng, Anne, Jack Paine, and Robert Powell. 2023. "Authoritarian Power Sharing: Concepts, Mechanisms, and Strategies" *Annual Review of Political Science* 26: 153–73.

Please bring your laptops to class today.

Class 16 - Discussion Day

- Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414. **Skip the appendix.**

Class 17 - Activity and Lecture Day*Medieval England/Europe*

- Erickson, Bradley O. "Constrained Monarchs, Stable Bargains" *Working Paper*.

Please bring your laptops to class today.

Class 18 - Lecture Day*Ancient Egypt*

- Eyre, Christopher. "Patronage, power, and corruption in pharaonic Egypt." *International Journal of Public Administration* 34.11 (2011): 701-711.

Ancient/Medieval China

- Xi, Tianyang. "All the emperor's men? Conflicts and power-sharing in imperial China." *Comparative Political Studies* 52.8 (2019): 1099-1130.

How do states determine who takes power?**Class 19 - Activity and Discussion Day**

- Meng, Anne. 2021. "Winning the Game of Thrones: Leadership Succession in Modern Autocracies." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65(5): 950–81. **Pages 950 - 964**

Class 20 - Lecture Day*Ancient Egypt*

- Finer, Samuel Edward. 1997. *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: Ancient Monarchies and Empires*. Oxford University Press. **Pages 182.**

Ancient/Medieval China

- Nong, Xin. 2024. "Informal Succession Institutions and Autocratic Survival: Evidence from Ancient China." *Journal of Economic History*. **PDF pages 11 - 18.**

Medieval England/Europe

- Kokkonen, Andrej, Jørgen Møller, and Anders Sundell. 2022. *The Politics of Succession: Forging Stable Monarchies in Europe, AD 1000-1800*. Oxford University Press. **Pages 95 - 103.**

Class 21 - Student Mini Presentation on Power-Sharing or Succession**Class 22 - Lecture Day**

- Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy*. Princeton University Press. **Pages 29 -61.**

Class 23 - Lecture Day*Medieval England/Europe*

- Van Zanden, Jan Luiten, Eltjo Buringh, and Maarten Bosker. 2012. "The Rise and Decline of European Parliaments, 1188–1789." *The Economic History Review* 65(3): 835–61.

Class 24 - Exam**What role do non-state institutions play in the governing actions of historical regimes?****Class 25 - Discussion Day**

- Becker, Sascha O., and Steven Pfaff. 2024. "Religion" In *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy*, Oxford University Press.

Ancient Egypt

- Finer, Samuel Edward. 1997. *The History of Government from the Earliest Times: Ancient Monarchies and Empires*. Oxford University Press. **Pages 139-143 and 184-186.**

Class 26 - Lecture Day*Medieval England/Europe*

- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2024. "Tilly Goes to Church: The Religious and Medieval Roots of European State Fragmentation." *American Political Science Review* 118(1): 88–107.
- Møller, Jørgen, and Jonathan Stavnskræ Doucette. 2022. *The Catholic Church and European State Formation, AD 1000-1500*. Oxford University Press. **Pages 9 -14 and 56-75**

Why and how do regime types change over time?**Class 27 - Discussion Day**

- Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. **Pages 15 - 47.**

Class 28 - Lecture Day*Ancient/Medieval China and Medieval England/Europe*

- Dincecco, Mark, and Yuhua Wang. 2018. "Violent Conflict and Political Development Over the Long Run: China versus Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 341–58.

Medieval England/Europe

- Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*. Princeton University Press. **Pages 197 -224.**

University Final Exam Day - Final Exam

University Resources

My goal is to create an inclusive learning environment in the course. The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must register with the DAS [here](#). Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied so you need to contact DAS as early as possible and contact me as early as possible in the semester to discuss the plan for implementation of your accommodations. For additional information about accessibility and accommodations, please contact the Department of Accessibility Services at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu.

University Honor Code

The Honor Code applies to all work submitted for courses in Emory College. Students who violate the Honor Code may be subject to a written mark on their record, failure of the course, suspension, permanent exclusion, or a combination of these and other sanctions. The Honor Code may be reviewed online [here](#).