Political Science 490/Sociology 476: Global Capitalism & Law

Spring 2018
Mondays 1-3:50pm
Parkes Hall 222

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Course Overview

Globalization entails greater interdependence and less national autonomy. It occurs as international flows of capital, goods, services, and people increase. Transactions, interactions and relationships that formerly occurred within national boundaries now occur across them. As part of globalization, legal forms and institutions are also spreading throughout the world. Transactions involving capital, goods, services and people are not self-sustaining; rather, they are supported and regulated by an institutional foundation that typically centers on the legal system. Because the frameworks that support these transactions exist primarily at the level of the nation-state, a governance mismatch has emerged. Globalization means that more is going on between national jurisdictions than within them, and tensions arise between competing institutional models. The substantive focus of this seminar is this intersection between globalizing markets and (predominately, but not exclusively) national legal forms and institutions. We will read work by sociologists, political scientists, economists, and lawyers addressing a range of issues related to the interaction between markets and legal systems.

Course Requirements and Grading

Active and thoughtful engagement with the material is essential to success in this course. There are four ways in which we assess your engagement with and mastery of the course material.

(1) Participation in the course discussion will account for 25% of your final grade. We expect that you will attend all seminar meetings and will be well prepared to contribute to the conversation.

(2) All students are required to serve as the author’s defendant in one course meeting. During the week in which you have been assigned the role of author’s defendant, you will be stepping into the shoes of an author of one of the readings assigned for that seminar meeting; you will be responsible for presenting the main arguments and evidence in the reading and will be expected to be prepared to respond to tough questions about the reading that are raised by the other members of the group. Your performance as author’s defendant will account for 10% of your grade.
(3) Each student will write two critical memos that outlines the main argument(s) in one or a set of readings and provides an incisive critique of the material. The critical memos should be submitted via email to the instructors no later than 8 PM the evening before the meeting in which the reading(s) appear. The memos should be in the range of 3-5 pages. The critical memos account for 25% of the final course grade.

(4) For the remaining 40% of your course grade you will submit a 15-20 page research proposal that outlines a puzzle that falls within the purview of the class, situates the puzzle in the relevant literature, develops a theoretical argument and observable implications, and sketches how you plan to conduct the research necessary to shed light on the puzzle (what kind of research design will allow you to answer the motivating question?). A one-page topic preview will be due May 7.

The due date for the final paper is Tuesday, June 12. We should have the paper in our hands by 5:00 PM on that day. Papers submitted after the deadline will be penalized by a half grade (from a B+ to a B, for example) for each 12-hour period that passes after the announced deadline. Barring unusual and challenging personal circumstances, we expect that all students in the course will complete the requirements on time.
Course Schedule and Reading List

Week 1 (Tuesday, April 3): who writes the rules of global economic governance? Note the special Tuesday meeting time.


Week 2 (April 9): law as precondition for the emergence and expansion of markets


Week 3 (April 16): social preconditions for markets


Week 4 (April 23): property law and property rights


Week 5 (April 30): market governance by contract: the case of the sovereign debt market


Week 6 (May 7): financialization and problems of governing markets


Week 7 (May 14): ratings and rankings as tools of market governance


Week 8 (May 21): taxing wealth and profits in an era of global capital mobility


MAY 28: MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY, NO MEETING

Week 9 (June 4): labor rights and regulation in a world of globalized production