



University of
Zurich^{UZH}

Public Choice Seminar Spring 2025

The Political Economy of Far-Right Support in the Global South

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Seminar: AFL-E-019, Tuesday, 12:15 - 13:45

Diversity Statement

You, as the participants of this class, are diverse in many ways. Diversity can refer to ways that you identify yourselves, including but not limited to gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. The diversity you bring to the class is viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit.

In this class, we want to promote diversity, not only because it fuels excellence and innovation but also because we want to ensure everyone that their contributions to the class are encouraged and appreciated. Your diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive classroom atmosphere and community. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Definitions: Many terms in this document are mainly used in an academic context. [Here](#) you find a list of the definitions for these terms. Please look them up using this resource if they are unfamiliar to you.

Accommodation for disadvantages: Students who live with disadvantages or chronic illnesses that affect their studies are entitled to accommodation for disadvantages. This adapts the general conditions for you during the examination, for example, you are granted more time. These decisions are not made by the individual lecturer but by the University's Disability Office. You should apply for such accommodation in good time. You can find more information [here](#).

Please consider the following websites and hotlines:

- If you have questions about financing your studies, please contact the [Students Financial Aid Office](#).
- If you think you have experienced discrimination on account of your sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, please contact the [Office for Gender Equality and Diversity](#).
- Do you think you or someone else has been affected by sexual harassment? Please consult the information on this website: [Protection Against Sexual Harassment](#).
- Are you experiencing personal problems or are you facing important decisions? Please consider psychological counseling, you find all information [here](#).
- Do you need to talk to someone in confidence and anonymity (German or English)? Please consider [nightline.ch](#), open from 20-24h daily via chat, email, or phone (provided by the student organizations of UZH and ETHZ).
- You find an overview of UZH student advisory services [here](#).

Outline of the topic

The far-right has been increasingly successful in elections around the world in recent decades. Due to anti-liberal and authoritarian tendencies within the far right, this development has raised concerns about democracy coming under threat, not only in the consolidated democracies of the Global North but also in younger democracies in the Global South.

Prominent theories posit that the rise of the far right is rooted in economic disappointments resulting from structural transformation. Transformation generates economic winners and losers. Dominant social groups perceive status threats. Far-right ideology lends itself well to politicizing these threats and disappointments. Globalization is a threat because domestic jobs are lost to foreign low-wage competition. Migrants compete for scarce jobs in the sectors most negatively affected by structural change. Glorifying better times from the past works well in the face of disappointments about increasing automatization.

However, existing theories often fail to extend easily beyond advanced democracies. This is mainly because in the Global South – which is home to some of the largest democracies in the world – structural transformation is vastly different. Yet, the same type of far-right parties and politicians succeed electorally.

What role do structural economic factors play in the far-right's success in the Global South? How does structural transformation differ between the Global South and North? What are the political effects of structural transformations? These are some of the guiding questions for this seminar.

Learning objectives

The seminar aims to lead students to a research frontier in Political Economy and Comparative Politics, i.e., the structural economic roots of far-right support in the Global South. To reach the frontier, we aim to establish a solid foundation by reviewing theories and evidence that link structural economic change and far-right voting. We will first introduce and discuss the fundamental concepts of structural change and the far right. Then, we will cover literature on economic explanations of far-right support in the Global North. Because this is the main point of departure towards the frontier, we will spend a substantial amount of time on this topic. This may seem counterintuitive for a seminar on the Global South. We do this because comparable research on Global South countries is scarce. Finally, we will discuss the scarce literature that deals with economic explanations of far-right support in the Global South.

Upon completion of the seminar, students

- ... can explain the economic roots of far-right support.
- ... understand the research frontier, i.e., define the limits of our current knowledge and reason about possibilities to move forward.
- ... recognize the main methodological approaches used to study the electoral effects of structural change.
- ... can critically evaluate academic and other writing on the topic.
- ... can identify important far-right parties, politicians, and supporters in the Global South.
- ... can produce written material on the topic.

Employability

At IPZ, we are committed to providing a learning experience that equips students with skills useful beyond academia. This class in particular fosters a number of skills that translate well to typical professions of political scientists such as political analysts, policy advisors, or journalism.

In this seminar, students learn to distill knowledge from cutting-edge academic writing, which is important to communicate up-to-date information to stakeholders, whether those are policymakers or the wider public. Moreover, students will be well-equipped to advise decision-makers on the political effects of economic policy. Next, to such hands-on substantive skills related to the core topics, the class is designed to deepen analytical thinking skills within the rational choice framework. The rational choice approach to political economy can be fruitfully applied to almost all problems of politics and economics. Notwithstanding the limits of human rationality, the rational choice approach is a useful starting point for analyzing any political problem because it provides fundamental building blocks for reasoning: Who are the relevant actors? What are their preferences? What are their choices, and what are their constraints? This empowers students to derive actionable recommendations in diverse political or economic contexts.

Format, requirements & grading

We will discuss the readings during the sessions, which requires **reading all papers in advance**. Some readings are optional, while mandatory readings are indicated in bold print below. Grading follows departmental standards for seminars: **80% for the written assignment and 20% for presentations**. However, the seminar paper includes a reflective journal that makes up 10% of the total grade.

The seminar paper is a **research proposal**. Instead of writing something that answers a question, students should focus on coming up with an interesting and well-motivated research question. The proposal should be partially based on class content and develop an innovative research idea. The goal is to outline a gap in the existing literature, derive a research question, motivate why answering the question is important, theorize about the research question, and outline a potentially feasible strategy to address the gap. The word limit is 2,500.

The presentations are **critical paper reviews**. Each student will present a paper. The presentation should outline the key ideas presented in the paper and critically engage with them. Find below some points one may consider when preparing a paper discussion for class. Remember that all research is a bit different, so not all points will apply equally to all papers.

The **reflective journal** is a tool for students to document their learning experiences and deepen their engagement with the course materials. Students should produce a journal entry for every session. A journal entry consists of a prior statement and a posterior statement. For the prior statement, students should look only at the information provided in the syllabus, i.e., the topic and titles of the assigned papers. In no more than 150 words (exceptions are possible) students should note what they expect or hope to learn from the readings and the session. For the posterior statement, students write no more than 350 words, whether the reading and the discussion in class met or challenged their expectations. Particularly, students should emphasize one key learning from the session or readings that stood out and explain why. This could be the most surprising learning, a learning that is personally meaningful, or a learning that a student deems important for any other reason.

- Brief summary of content
 - What is the purpose of the paper?
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - What is the main research question?
 - What is the main argument and result?
 - What is the context?
- Critically comment on:
 - Is the argument persuasive? Are you convinced?
 - What is new, innovative, or original about the paper? What did we learn?
 - How important is the contribution to the related literature?
 - What is the bigger picture that relates to this work?
 - Are there theoretical or empirical weaknesses?
 - Are there alternative explanations not (sufficiently) discussed by the author(s)?
 - Does the paper raise further questions?
 - How internally and externally valid is the research?
 - Are there important real-world (policy) implications?

AI in this class

There is much talk about how artificial intelligence (AI) transforms academic teaching. In this class, too, there is ample opportunity to use AI. In general, I am not opposed to students using AI as a tool to increase their productivity. I encourage you to use AI to improve the clarity of your writing. AI should not be used to generate ideas or arguments. Substantial thinking should be always your own. If any AI tools are used beyond writing aids, students need to document which software was used, what inputs were given, and what outputs were produced. These materials can be appended to the writings.

Program

Date	Topic	Readings
	<i>Conceptual foundations</i>	
18.02.2025	Structural change 1	Kuznets (1973)
25.02.2025	Structural change 2	Gollin and Kaboski (2023); Diao et al. (2019); Herrendorf et al. (2014)
04.03.2025	The far right as a global concept	Pirro (2023); de Jonge et al. (2024)
	<i>The far right in the Global South</i>	
11.03.2025	Latin America 1	Hunter and Power (2019); Kestler (2022)
18.03.2025	Latin America 2	de Andrade Aragão et al. (2024)
25.03.2025	Asia 1	Thachil (2014); Chhibber and Verma (2014)
01.04.2025	Asia 2	Tadem (2020); Kumral (2023)
	<i>Economic transformations and far right success</i>	
08.04.2025	Globalization backlash	Milner (2021); Colantone and Stanig (2018); Bornschier (2018)
15.04.2025	Economic (in)security and expectations	Kurer and Van Staaldunin (2022); Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2019); Guiso et al. (2024)
29.04.2025	Environmental shocks	Cremaschi et al. (2024); Bhavnani and Lacina (2015); Cremaschi and Stanig (2024)
	<i>Evidence from the Global South</i>	
06.05.2025	Asia 1	Suryanarayan (2019); Aneja et al. (2023)
13.05.2025	Asia 2	Helms (2024); Savirani (2020)
20.05.2025	Latin America	Samuels et al. (2024); Antunes de Oliveira (2019); Kerler and Doyle (2025)
27.05.2025	Q&A and academic writing session	
10.06.2025	Seminar paper deadline	

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