Institutional Analysis: Concepts and Applications  
POLS Y673/ECON E724/SPEA P710/LAW B592  
TR 1:00–2:15 p.m.  
Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park Ave. Tocqueville Room, 1st Floor

Prof. Lee J. Alston     ljalston@indiana.edu  
Office Hours: 2:30–3:30 TR and by appt.     (812) 855–3151  
https://ostromworkshop.indiana.edu/people/directors/lee-alston.html

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The basis of institutional analysis is that institutions (e.g., laws and written and unwritten rules in organizations and families) and norms are important determinants of individual and group behavior. Behavior, in turn, affects socio-economic development. In the first part of the course, our initial focus is to take institutions as exogenous and understand how institutions lead to different modes of contracting and economic performance. We will explore at a more micro level the outcomes of institutions, e.g. the rights that individuals and groups have to resources (property rights); and the forms of organization of production and exchange (markets and contracts). In Part II of the course, we explore the outcomes of formal political institutions (interest groups, legislative, executive and judicial branches, and the bureaucracy) on political outcomes. We take as exogenous the basic constitutional rules and the current realization of economic performance. In part III, we analyze the circumstances under which norms and beliefs can change and how those changes can lead to transitions to different economic and political trajectories with different beliefs. Throughout the course, we use case studies as well as econometric evidence to help students engage in applied work in institutional analysis.

REQUIREMENTS

This is a participation-heavy course. Students should be prepared to summarize the main arguments in the weekly readings, and formulate observations and questions. Each Thursday session a student will lead off with her/his 10 minute summary. Summaries should relate the readings to each other and with material covered in the previous weeks. She or he will be the first to reply to questions about the readings from others in the class. Finally, a good portion of your grade in this course will depend on the final research paper. Each student will present an outline of the paper in class in week 9 and receive feedback from fellow students and instructors. Students will submit an electronic copy of their complete outline with bibliography no later than October 14 at 5pm. We will repeat the same exercise in week 13 for the first draft of the paper, which is due no later than November 12 at noon. This time, however, students will not present in class. Instead, the papers will be made available to students on CANVAS ahead of time. It will be your responsibility to read the papers and come prepared with comments and suggestions. The final draft of the paper is due on Sunday December 3 at 5 pm. The course culminates in a mini-

GOALS OF THE COURSE

The basic goal of this class is to provide you with a toolkit that will sharpen your ability to analyze institutions in their social, political, economic, and legal context; to see institutions as a major driver of development in historical as well as contemporary societies; and to learn from what worked and what did not work in the development of institutions through time in order to better understand societal challenges ahead. This kind of analysis requires an interdisciplinary approach, which is best developed when students with different disciplinary backgrounds come together to share ideas. Finally, this course aims at improving your verbal, writing and presentation skills.

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings on the syllabus are required. Links to selected readings as well as working papers are available on the online copy of the syllabus (https://ostromworkshop.indiana.edu/opportunities/courses/index.html or ON CANVAS). If you wish more sources relevant to any area that we cover, especially in preparation for your final paper, please let us know.

COMPONENTS OF GRADE

Class participation 40%
First draft and presentation 25%
Final paper 25%

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If any student will require assistance or academic accommodations for a disability, please contact us after class, during our office hours, or by individual appointment. You must have established your eligibility for disability support services through the Office of Disability Services for Students in Wells Library W302, 812-855-7578.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

It is the policy of Indiana University that instructors must reasonably accommodate students who want to observe their religious holidays at times when academic requirements conflict with those observances. This policy is intended to ensure that both faculty and students are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities in the accommodation of students’ religious observances. If a conflict with a religious observance exists, a student must make a request to the instructor for a reasonable accommodation for that observance by the end of the second week of the course. Students seeking accommodations for religious observances can find the necessary form here: http://vpfaa.indiana.edu/forms/index.shtml.
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic misconduct is defined as any activity that tends to undermine the academic integrity of the institution. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference, violation of course rules, and facilitating academic dishonesty. The faculty member may take into account the seriousness of the violation in assessing a penalty for acts of academic misconduct. The faculty member must report all cases of academic misconduct to the dean of students, or appropriate official. The university may discipline a student for academic misconduct.

SYLLABUS

Week 1: Introduction to the Course
August 22-24

Tuesday: Overview of the course and requirements
No readings

Thursday: The Framework: Three Levels of Institutional Analysis
- Alston et al. Introduction and Introduction to Part I (ON CANVAS)

Week 2: Institutions
August 29-31

Tuesday: Institutions and Property Rights
- Alston et al. Chapter 1 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday: Institutions and Norms: Applications
Week 3: Property Rights  
September 5-7

Tuesday: Property Rights and Transaction Costs  
- Alston et al. Chapter 2 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday: Property Rights from the Father, Ronald Coase  

Week 4: Property Rights/Conflict  
September 12

Tuesday  
- Alston, Harris and Mueller  

Thursday: No class; work on a proposal and submit a one paragraph idea on Tuesday, Sept 19

Week 5: Organization and Contracts  
September 19-22

Tuesday:  
- Alston et al. Chapter 3 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday:  
Week 6: From Economic Outcomes to Political Performance
September 26-28

Tuesday:
- Alston et al. Part II (ON CANVAS)
- Alston et al. Chapter 4 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday:

Week 7: Legislative and Executive
October 3-5

Tuesday:
- Alston et al. Chapter 5 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday:

Week 8: Levi Fest
October 10-12

Tuesday:

Thursday:
Week 9: Student Presentations  
Outline and Bibliography  
October 17-19

Week 10: Bureaucracies  
October 24-26

Tuesday:  
- Alston et al. Chapter 6 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday:  

Week 11: Judiciary  
October 31- November 2

Tuesday:  
- Alston et al. Chapter 7 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday:  

Week 12: The Dynamics of Economic and Political Development  
November 7-9

Tuesday:  
- Alston et al. Part III and Chapter 8 (ON CANVAS)

Thursday
- Alston et al. Chapter 9 (ON CANVAS)
Week 13: The Dynamics of Economic and Political Development (Continued)
November 14-16

Tuesday:
- Carugati, Federica, “Continuity, Consensus, and Credible Commitment: The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Constitutional Stability” (ON CANVAS)

Custom and Culture

Thursday:
- Alston, Eric, “Custom and the Formalization of Mineral Property Rights: Evidence from the Supreme Court of Colorado, 1868-1895” (ON CANVAS)
- Mueller, Bernardo and Joao Gabriel Ayello, “How the East was Lost: Coevolution of Institutions and Culture in the 16th Century Portuguese Empire” (ON CANVAS)

Thanksgiving Break
November 21-23

Student Presentations
November 28, 30, and December 5

December 7
What Have We Learned?