

Advanced Political Economy (PUBL0118)

Department of Political Science,
University College London

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Module Convenors

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Moodle Home

<https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=62859>

Contact Hours

See <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/timetable> for lecture and seminar times and locations.

Lectures

1+ hour per week

Seminars

1 hour per week

Student Support and Feedback Hours

Available every teaching week.

See the [SPPBOOK](#) Moodle page for days/times and to make bookings.

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Part A

Module Overview

I Module Description

This is the core module for the MSc Political Economy degree. It is designed to develop advanced skills and knowledge in the field of political economy. The module is structured around three very broad societal challenges which are used as lenses through which to explore the field.

In general, the goal is neither to provide an exhaustive understanding of the politics of each challenge, nor to expose you to an exhaustive list of canonical political economy readings. However, we *do* make efforts in the reading lists to provide pointers to important elements of the latter that can speak to the specific societal challenges that we study while also carrying broader lessons.

Rather, the core goal is to develop your analytical political economy skills in the direction of ‘problem-solving’ as opposed to ‘literature-knowing’. Solving problems requires knowing about theory and evidence, and we avoid reinventing those wheels by learning from existing work. We also aim to privilege reasonably generalisable theory, on the basis that this will better equip you to tackle other societal challenges that motivate you.

II Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module students should have an understanding of:

- (a) Identify, describe and analyze core contemporary challenges in national and international political economies.
- (b) Identify, describe and analyze variation in key outcomes between countries and across time.
- (c) Recognize global, regional and national phenomena and describe their interactions.
- (d) Summarize, compare and appraise existing interpretations and explanations of the variation in (a) and the phenomena in (b).
- (e) Formulate additional implications for future political economy challenges and/or design appropriate empirical research questions.
- (f) Communicate clearly to an appropriate audience.
- (g) Critically reflect on own learning.

III The Structure of the Module

The module is structured around four five-week blocks:

1. Challenge 1: Climate Change and the Energy Transition
 - Led by Tim Hicks.
 - First five weeks of Term 1.

2. Challenge 2: Preserving democracy in the age of automation and AI
 - Led by Felipe Balcazar.
 - Second five weeks of Term 1.
3. Challenge 3: National states in a global political economy
 - Led by Lucy Barnes.
 - First five weeks of Term 2.
4. The Project Phase
 - Jointly-led by Tim, Felipe, and Lucy.
 - Second five weeks of Term 2.

IV Contact With Teaching Staff

The class will meet once per week across terms 1 and 2 for a three-hour combination of lecture, question time, and seminar activity. Please consult the [UCL Timetable website](#) for the most up-to-date information on the time and place.

The lectures will typically run for between 1 and 2 hours, depending on the topic and volume of material. While the focus will vary, they will typically be used to set out some aspects of the theoretical core of the respective week's required "General Political Economy" readings, together with an explanation of how that material can be related to the required "Applied" readings.

The seminar hours will provide a forum for more focused discussion, especially on how to critique and apply the theoretical arguments to empirical evidence. Each week, you should expect to be ready to discuss all of the required readings. You are also very welcome to raise issues from the further readings, and beyond. **If you have not read the required material, you will not be prepared for the seminars and so you may find them uncomfortable when called-upon to speak.**

Lectures are *not* a substitute for you completing the readings. They are a complement.

1 Student Support and Feedback Hours

All module instructors will, separately, also offer Student Support and Feedback Hour appointments.¹ We expect to be able to offer a mix of online and in-person appointments.

You can book appointments online with each of us via the [SPPBOOK Moodle page](#).

Please come and see us to talk about *anything* in this module that you find intriguing, puzzling, or confusing! They are a valuable resource that you have paid for and we strongly encourage you to make use of them. There is no question too "silly", too "trivial", to bring to us in these sessions! N.b. you are welcome to make appointments for just yourself, or for small groups of you who want to discuss the same thing(s).

¹These may sometimes be referred to as "Office Hours".

V Technology Use in This Module

The primary system that we will use will be **Moodle**. See the link to the module's Moodle home page on the front cover of this document. Moodle is where you will find, amongst other things:

- The definitive version of this module outline.
- Lecture slides.
- Copies of readings marked with  (below).

2 Required Task: MyPortfolio setup and induction activity

The other important technology that we will use is 'MyPortfolio'. This is the software UCL uses to enable you to work on and submit your portfolio entries.

One important task that you need to accomplish early on in the module is to learn how to use <https://myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk/>.

Before you can start working on MyPortfolio, you need to login and complete a short Induction Activity. This is not assessed work but it's essential that you familiarise yourself with MyPortfolio so that you can focus on content once we get going.

To get started follow these steps (these are often best done on a computer/laptop rather than a phone):

- Go to MyPortfolio and login using your UCL username (note: you only need your UCL ID, i.e. the 7 letter thing, not the full email address) and password.
- Ensure you accept the Privacy Statement for access – some people have missed the toggles to confirm you accept.
- From the main page (the “dashboard”) you will see a link to complete the induction activity.

3 No Screens in Lectures or Seminars

After many years of delivering modules, we have decided to request that nobody uses laptops, tablets, or smart phones during our lectures or seminars. We have not come to this decision lightly, and feel it is important to explain our reasons.

First, our experience of teaching over the past few years shows that having screens out during lectures poses an apparently irresistible temptation for the user to distract themselves and others. It is not possible to pay full attention to a lecture while checking emails, scrolling social media, watching videos, and so on. People in the vicinity of such activities are also very distracted by them. It is this externality that leads us to say no screens in lectures. (This logic of harm to others applies less clearly to “e-paper” devices which tend not to have such distracting functions built into them, and so we are more relaxed about these in lectures.)

Second, while it is possible for similar dynamics to play out in seminars as they do in lectures, this is not quite as common in what is a smaller and more interactive group setting. The bigger problem that we have found from screen use in seminars is that they become a crutch for people who have not completed the required readings before the seminar. Some students form the impression that it is appropriate to simply skim-read things in the middle of the seminar, rather than prepare for it beforehand. When there is a room full of unprepared students, the seminar discussions tend to lack educational value. So, once again, there is an externality issue here that leads us to say “no screens”. (N.b. “e-paper” devices are not immune to this line of concern, and so we request that they are not used in seminars.)

If we see someone using screens in lectures or seminars, we will politely ask them to put it away.

The only exceptions to these rules relate to individuals who have “Reasonable Academic Adjustment” (RAA) statements that indicate specific needs for the use of screens in lectures and/or seminars. Please do speak to any of the PUBL0118 module convenors if you have any concerns about any of this.

4 Artificial Intelligence

- **The use of AI to generate text for formative and summative assessments for the module is forbidden.**
- UCL has determined that, “Using GenAI tools to check your grammar or spelling is usually appropriate if the tool is not rewriting a large proportion of your work”.² Our advice to you is *not* to use AI tools for this purpose.
 - **Using such tools will reduce the degree to which you take time to re-read and hone your own work.**
 - **AI tools will not be available in the May exam for this module, and so you will create more difficulties for yourself then if you have become reliant on them.**
- **Our strong advice is not to use AI tools to provide summaries of module readings.**
 - **Building intellectual capacity through high quality reading is a core part of this module.** You do not build those intellectual skills without doing the actual reading yourself.
 - We will often care very deeply about some of the very detailed aspects of texts and it is unlikely you will be aware of those if you only read summaries.
- You can find further [generic guidance regarding AI usage at UCL](#).

VI Assessment/Assignment Information

This section sets out the assessments/assignments that you will be required to complete as part of this module. Table 1 provides a summary of these, giving an overview what is expected, when, and how much each assessment will contribute to your final module grade (i.e. the weighting).

We will tell you much more about the summative (i.e. for-credit) assignments – including assessment criteria – closer to their due dates. Until then, please believe us when we tell you that the best way to prepare for those assessments is to engage with the module readings, classes, and activities in the ways we have structured.

N.b. for the purposes of the April/May exam, we are adopting the policy that anything that is listed under “Required Readings” in the weekly reading lists, as well as any lecture slides/material, constitutes the “examinable” material.

5 Weekly Portfolio Entries

As part of your formative (i.e. developmental) work for this module, every week you will post a portfolio entry into your private workspace on [MyPortfolio](#). We ask you to do this as a way to provide manageable, regular, and potentially very creative ways for you to engage with the

²<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/exams-and-assessments/assessment-success-guide/engaging-generative-ai-your-education-and-assessment>.

Assignment	When?	Length	Weighting
Formative			
$\approx 15 \times$ portfolio entries	Weeks 1–15	500–1,500 words (or equivalent)	0%
Group project	Weeks 16–20	≈ 30 min. Presentation & Q&A	0%
Summative			
Portfolio	April/May (TBC)	2,500 words (or equivalent)	50%
Exam	April/May (TBC)	3 hours	50%

Table 1: An overview of assessments and assignments for the module.

material we are studying. These portfolio entries also give you the chance to get feedback from instructors and peers, alike. You can use that feedback to revise and improve these entries – and then submit (some of) those revised entries for summative assessment at the end of the module.

Each week there will be a series of prompts, i.e. suggestions as to what you could write, but you are encouraged to try out something you think of yourself—as long as it is broadly relevant to that week’s topic. Check with the lecturer for the week’s topic if you’re not sure. We will not be rigidly policing the boundaries of each week’s topic, so don’t stress too much about this.

We will also include suggestions as to how you can produce a longer piece of writing, which we will call “research memos”. For instance, you might choose to write something that made an explicit attempt to develop an argument and probe its empirical plausibility. Or you might notice a research question that you find interesting, and then propose a research design that could answer it. So you can use the portfolio entries to produce longer-form pieces of work, perhaps taking longer than a week to produce such a longer piece of work. We will not be requiring that you write exactly 15 entries of formative work. The point is for you to work on things at the intersection of being useful (for module progress) and interesting to you.

As we proceed through the term, you will also be sharing some of your posts with each other and with the lecturer, to foster dialogue and a sense of shared responsibility among the group for our collective learning, and to practice and demonstrate giving and receiving feedback effectively.

You can include pictures, photographs, sound recordings and embedded media in your posts, or as your posts, if you wish. Just remember to reference the source of all ideas that are not your own via a bibliography at the end of your post because you don’t want to forget later where your ideas came from. Visual materials such as photos do not require a bibliography entry but the creator and, if applicable, copyright holder should be acknowledged directly below the image.

You can come back to earlier posts and keep working on them throughout the term at any time. You can ask for feedback from the rest of the group or specific classmates. Some of you might spend most of your energy on one of the pages and just keep a few notes and doodlings for the others. Others of you might write a number of shorter pieces and work on making them really polished.

To guide your thinking on what sorts of things to work on for portfolio entries, we note here that our expectation is that the summative submission of your portfolio will be the part of the assessment where you demonstrate your abilities regarding Learning Outcomes d–g, as defined above in Section II. Please do feel free to discuss this with any of us during the year, if you have any questions.

Overall, though, we very much encourage you to be imaginative, creative and daring as you work on your portfolio during the year. What is the worst that can happen, after all?

VII Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the cornerstone of university research and teaching, so that all university staff, speakers, and students can freely explore questions and ideas and challenge perceived views and opinions, without being censored or harassed by a government, any state authorities, the University, other students, or external pressure groups.³ As part of the UCL academic community, all staff, speakers, and students share these responsibilities:

- **Everyone must respect freedom of thought and freedom of expression.** Your lecturer will not limit what can be discussed in the seminar, as long as it is relevant to the subject. They will not censor any topics, and they will expose you to controversial issues, questions, facts, views, and debates.
 - You may disagree with some facts or views that you read or hear in the classroom. You are encouraged to engage with these facts and views in a respectful manner.
 - Your lecturer will not penalise you merely for expressing views they or other students disagree with. However, they will expect you to present logical arguments supported by evidence.
- **You are explicitly prohibited from recording, publishing, distributing or transferring any class material/content**, in whole or in part, in any format, to any individual or entity outside the module, linking to or posting it online (including social media), or making it otherwise available to any person or entity outside the module, unless you have received prior specific written approval from the module leader. You are also explicitly prohibited from aiding or abetting in any of these actions. Similarly, your lecturer will not record, publish or distribute seminar sessions without the explicit consent of the participants.
- **By agreeing to take this module, you agree to abide by these terms. If you do not comply with these terms, you will potentially be subject to disciplinary actions** similar to those under violations of the university [Student Code of Conduct](#).

³As defined in Statute 18 of the UCL Charter and Statutes, academic freedom's role is to "ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges."

Part B

Reading Lists and Weekly Tasks

I Introductions

The lists that follows are organised by weekly lecture topic. You are not expected to read everything on the list, but **you must read all of the readings in the “Required Readings” lists**. We strongly encourage you to read any “Short/Popular Readings” before each seminar, too.

Both the “Required Readings” and “Further Readings” lists are separated into sub-lists, referred to as “General Political Economy” (GPE) and “Applied”. This reflects the underlying structure of this module, where we are using a series of “societal challenges” as vehicles for the study of Political Economy. As such, the GPE lists contain readings that are, in some sense, part of the Political Economy canon, whilst not being written in a way that (necessarily) directly covers the particular societal challenge for which it is being deployed. Meanwhile, the “Applied” lists contain readings that are directly on the topic of the relevant challenge.

Note that there are inevitably limits to the extent to which a reading list for a single module can provide full coverage of all areas of a subfield like Political Economy. We have sought a balance between contemporary relevance and “canon”, skewed towards our motivation to present Political Economy in a “problem-solving” light. Moreover, our intention is to give you the skills and intellectual disposition to be able to independently consume and then use material from those areas of Political Economy (and the social sciences more broadly).

Each week you should come to your seminar class prepared to discuss what you have read with others. **Seminars are dedicated times when you and your peers discuss module material in a structured way. If you have not completed the required readings, neither you nor your seminar peers will get as much value from the class.**

N.b. scholars who are not white men have typically faced disproportionate barriers to influencing scholarly debates, for various reasons. Consequently, in constructing this reading list, we have attempted to improve the diversity of the scholars that it is formed from, and also to promote those readings, where appropriate. This is very clearly a work in progress, so your comments and suggestions on how to continue improvements in this regard would be extremely welcome. The trade-off that we have sought to navigate, however imperfectly, is the presentation of the prominent influences on prominent literatures, whilst acknowledging that – even more so in the past – those literatures and influences have very often been determined by a rather unrepresentative cohort of scholars.

One way that we have endeavoured to make the contributions of those who are not white men somewhat more prominent than they might otherwise be is to place them at the top of the “Further Readings” lists for each topic. These lists are otherwise sorted chronologically and then alphabetically by first author.

The reading list that follows is designed to be as easy to use as possible – in the sense of it being clear what you should read and clear how you can obtain it. Here are some general tips about the presentation of the reading list:

- The reading list (below) is constructed such that there are *Required Readings* and *Further Readings*. *Required Readings* should all be available online, in one form or another.
- Where available, the URL based on the DOI (standing for Digital Object Identifier) of the reading is included. This will link you to *one* place where the reading is published online.

- The DOI links will only provide you with access when you are connected to the UCL network (including by VPN). If you are off-campus, you can use the Library’s off-campus facility by visiting <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/electronic-resources>.
- Top tip: you can short-cut the library system by tweaking the URL that you are redirected to according to the following example/pattern:
 - Original URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00389.x>
 - New URL: <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00389.x>
 - I.e. you replace the ‘dots’ in the domain name with ‘dashes’ and then append ‘libproxy.ucl.ac.uk’ to the domain name, keeping the rest of the address the same.
 - The Moodle page for this module has a document called “‘UCL LibProxy-ify’ Bookmark Link’ which provides details of a ‘bookmarklet’ that you can use to make that URL-rewriting process as easy as a single click.
- N.b. the DOI link may *not* be the place through which the UCL subscription provides access. (This is not in our control.) If this occurs, you will often find that <http://www.jstor.org/> will work for you, subject to you being on-campus or having used the “UCL LibProxy-ify” trick.
- We have also tried to provide URLs for readings that are not constrained by off-campus and/or login restrictions. Please let us know if any of these no longer work.
- Some of the readings listed below are a little more challenging, and have been marked with the 🧠 symbol.⁴ They may be helpful to you for increasing your understanding of the intuition of arguments, but do not worry about difficulties that you may have understanding mathematical or statistical material in these papers.

Symbol	Meaning
	A reading that is available via the module’s Moodle page.
	A more difficult reading, usually because of mathematical theory and/or heavily statistical empirical evidence.
	A podcast or other audio-visual ‘reading’.
	One or more of the authors is currently affiliated with UCL.

Table 2: Key to symbols used to denote features of readings listed for this module.

One potential downside to electronic journals is that they do not foster the browsing around issues and volumes that comes with the hard copies of journals. We very much encourage you to do this kind of browsing – via web sites or hard copies, as you prefer. This is likely to be particularly helpful when preparing for essays.

⁴Yes, it is a helmet; intended to suggest protection for your head.

Generic Portfolio Prompts

This is a set of prompts that can be used for portfolio entries in any of the first 15 weeks of the module. In any given week, there may also be some additional topic-specific prompts that you may find it interesting to use, instead.

- Plot some data that relates to a theoretical argument under discussion this week – not something just re-plotted directly from a reading. Provide accompanying analysis on the extent to which your plot does or does not support that theoretical argument.
- Describe how a political or (broadly interpreted) economic organisation of your choosing operates in ways that are consistent with a theoretical perspective under discussion this week. In what way(s) do its activities appear to run counter to those theoretical expectations?
- Take a photo of a site in London. Describe how this picture can be used to illustrate, or critique, a theoretical perspective under discussion this week.
- Record a 30-second video in which you explain the core argument and findings of one of the required readings this week, as if you were explaining it to someone who had never studied either Politics or Economics.

II Challenge 1: Climate Change and the Energy Transition

The challenge that we will explore in this block of the module is motivated by consideration of the global societal benefits of mitigating climate change. This is obviously a very broad topic, so we further narrow it down to a focus on analysing the implications of transitioning global energy consumption – i.e. including energy use for transport, heating, industrial processes – from a broadly carbon-combustion-based system to one that is very largely electrified and supplied by zero-carbon technologies: the energy transition.

An important point to make is that, in adopting this challenge as a focus of our study, we are *not* claiming that this energy transition is inevitably going to succeed. Rather, we take the climate-science consensus as indicating that a transition of this sort would have *very* large benefits for human societies, and then seek to understand what political economy can teach us about what kinds of impediments exist to such an endeavour, and then how they might be overcome. As such, you do not have to believe that the energy transition is necessary in order to get intellectual value from studying this challenge. Even if you are sceptical about the merits of the energy transition itself, we argue it is a useful case to practice our problem-solving orientation to political economy.

1 Defining the Challenge

The purpose of this topic is to go into some detail on the nature of the energy transition that constitutes this particular societal challenge. One aspect of this is necessarily to consider some of the specifics of the technological and (therefore) industrial changes that are implied by any such transition. A related aspect, though, is to take some steps to understand what the technological and resource *possibilities* even are in this space. It would be far less interesting to study this societal challenge as a lens through which to understand political economy if those latter possibilities turned out to be impossibilities.

We pair consideration of those specifics regarding the energy transition with some more general theoretical insights that can speak to possible doubts about whether and how such large-scale economic change could be possible.

Portfolio Prompts

- For a country of your choosing, describe the plausible details of what the energy transition would mean for any aspect of the supply of capital and/or (skilled) labour.
- Reflect on the extent to which you think the general public (of whichever country or countries you are interested in) understand the extent of societal/economic/industrial change that is implied by the energy transition.

Short/Popular Readings

- Applied:
 -  Roberts, David (2017). ‘The key to tackling climate change: electrify everything’. *Vox.com* URL: <https://consortia.myescenter.com/LowCarbon/electrify-everything-102717.pdf>. (Retrieved 20/07/2026)
 - Walter, Dean, Kingsmill Bond and Sam Butler-Sloss (25th June 2025). *The electrification imperative. How a switch from burning fossil fuels to using electricity can unlock the full value of the energy transition*. Ember

URL: <https://ember-energy.org/latest-insights/the-electrification-imperative/>. (Retrieved 21/08/2026)

- “” McKibben, Bill and Ezra Klein (10th July 2026). *Energy Abundance Is Here. Can the U.S. Catch Up?* The Ezra Klein Show, New York Times
URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000011018059/energy-abundance-is-here-can-the-us-catch-up.html>. (Retrieved 20/07/2026)

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Blyth, Mark (2002). *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09781139087230>
 - Beckert, Jens (2013). ‘Imagined futures: fictional expectations in the economy’. *Theory and Society* 42:3, pp. 219–240.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-013-9191-2>
URL: https://pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item_1719293_7/component/file_3320155/content. (Retrieved 20/07/2026)
- Applied:
 - Mayfield, Erin, Jesse Jenkins, Eric Larson and Chris Greig (2023). ‘Labor pathways to achieve net-zero emissions in the United States by mid-century’. *Energy Policy* 177, p. 113516.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2023.113516>
 - Way, Rupert, Matthew C. Ives, Penny Mealy and J. Doyne Farmer (2022). ‘Empirically grounded technology forecasts and the energy transition’. *Joule* 6:9, pp. 2057–2082.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joule.2022.08.009>
 - Fulghum, Nicolas, Wilmar Suarez, Katye Altieri and Kostantsa Rangelova (2026). *Global Electricity Review 2026*. Tech. rep. Ember, Chapters 1–3
URL: <https://ember-energy.org/latest-insights/global-electricity-review-2026/> (Retrieved 21/08/2026)

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:
 -  Mazzucato, Mariana (2022). *Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism. A moonshot guide to changing capitalism*. London: Penguin Books. 244 pp.
 - Polanyi, Karl (1944). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Penguin, 2024
 - Lindvall, Johannes (2009). ‘The Real But Limited Influence of Expert Ideas’. *World Politics* 61:4, pp. 703–730.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109990104>
 - Beckert, Jens (2016). *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
- Applied:
 - Applied Political Economy:

- *  Acemoglu, Daron, Ufuk Akcigit, Douglas Hanley and William Kerr (2016). ‘Transition to Clean Technology’. *Journal of Political Economy* 124:1, pp. 52–104.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/684511>
- * Aklin, Michaël and Matto Mildenberger (2020). ‘Prisoners of the Wrong Dilemma: Why Distributive Conflict, Not Collective Action, Characterizes the Politics of Climate Change’. *Global Environmental Politics* 20:4, pp. 4–27.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00578
- * Kennard, Amanda and Keith E. Schnakenberg (2023). ‘Comment: Global Climate Policy and Collective Action’. *Global Environmental Politics* 23:1, pp. 133–144.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_c_00699
- Climate/Energy Science:
 - * Otto, Ilona M. et al. (2020). ‘Social tipping dynamics for stabilizing Earth’s climate by 2050’. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117:5, pp. 2354–2365.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1900577117>
 - * Larson, Eric et al. (2021). *Net-Zero America. Potential Pathways, Infrastructure, and Impacts*. Tech. rep. Princeton University
URL: <https://netzeroamerica.princeton.edu/the-report>. (Retrieved 21/08/2026)
 - * Nijse, Femke J. M. M. et al. (2023). ‘The momentum of the solar energy transition’. *Nature Communications* 14:1.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-41971-7>
 - * Dardour, Saied, Deborah Ayres and Lourdes Zamora (2026). *Renewable power generation costs in 2025*. Tech. rep. International Renewable Energy Agency
URL: <https://www.irena.org/Publications/2026/Jul/Renewable-Power-Generation-Costs-in-2025>. (Retrieved 21/08/2026)
 - * Aklin, Michaël and Johannes Urpelainen (2018). *Renewables: The Politics of a Global Energy Transition*. MIT Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11112.001.0001>
 - * Bogdanov, Dmitrii et al. (2021). ‘Low-cost renewable electricity as the key driver of the global energy transition towards sustainability’. *Energy* 227, p. 120467.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.energy.2021.120467>
 - * Mercure, J.-F. et al. (2021). ‘Reframing incentives for climate policy action’. *Nature Energy* 6:12, pp. 1133–1143.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-021-00934-2>
 - * Xie, Judy Jingwei, Melissa Martin, Joeri Rogelj and Iain Staffell (2023). ‘Distributional labour challenges and opportunities for decarbonizing the US power system’. *Nature Climate Change* 13:11, pp. 1203–1212.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-023-01802-5>
 - * Popp, David, Francesco Vona, Myriam Grégoire-Zawilski and Giovanni Marin (2024). ‘The Next Wave of Energy Innovation: Which Technologies? Which Skills?’ *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy* 18:1, pp. 45–65.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/728292>
 - * Černý, Martin et al. (2024). ‘Global employment and skill level requirements for ‘Post-Carbon Europe’’. *Ecological Economics* 216, p. 108014.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.108014>
 - * Bücker, Joris, R. Maria del Rio-Chanona, Anton Pichler, Matthew C. Ives and J. Doyne Farmer (2025). ‘Employment dynamics in a rapid decarbonization of the US power sector’. *Joule* 9:2, p. 101803.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joule.2024.12.004>

- * Calvillo, Christian F., Antonios Katris, Long Zhou and Karen Turner (2025). ‘Jobs, skills and regional implications of the low carbon residential heat transition in the UK’. *Energy Policy* 202, p. 114579.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2025.114579>

2 Electoral Interests and Representation

The purpose of this topic is to illustrate how prominent approaches to political economy have made sense of how policy preferences are formed within societies, how those can find expression within electoral politics – and naturally to consider how these schools of thought can be applied to climate/energy policy. The Required Readings contrast financial/economic interest approach with one that sees scope for more normative underpinnings to mass preferences. The Further Readings are broken out by “Preference Formation” and then how those preferences come to be politically/electorally represented. These lists are relatively extensive, (partially) reflecting what are very large literatures in these spaces.

Portfolio Prompts

- Summarise the messaging strategy of a prominent politician. Describe the extent to which you observe them focusing on the material (self-)interests of voters, versus more normative/moralised discourse.
- Discuss whether and, if so, in what ways there is variation in the supply side policies of two or more political parties that electorally compete with each other.

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Cavaillé, Charlotte (2023). *Fair Enough?: Support for Redistribution in the Age of Inequality*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009366038>
 - Boix, Carles (1997). ‘Political Parties and the Supply Side of the Economy: The Provision of Physical and Human Capital in Advanced Economies, 1960–90’. *American Journal of Political Science* 41:3, pp. 814–845.
DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/2111676>
- Applied:
 - Mildenberger, Matto, Erick Lachapelle, Kathryn Harrison and Isabelle Stadelmann-Steffen (2022). ‘Limited impacts of carbon tax rebate programmes on public support for carbon pricing’. *Nature Climate Change* 12:2, pp. 141–147.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-021-01268-3>
 - Colantone, Italo, Livio Di Lonardo, Yotam Margalit and Marco Percoco (2024). ‘The Political Consequences of Green Policies: Evidence from Italy’. *American Political Science Review* 118:1, pp. 108–126.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055423000308>

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Preference Formation:
 - * Häusermann, Silja, Thomas Kurer and Hanna Schwander (2016). ‘Sharing the Risk? Households, Labor Market Vulnerability, and Social Policy Preferences in Western Europe’. *Journal of Politics* 78:4, pp. 1045–1060.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/686972>

- * Bechtel, Michael M., Federica Genovese and Kenneth F. Scheve (2017). 'Interests, Norms and Support for the Provision of Global Public Goods: The Case of Climate Co-operation'. *British Journal of Political Science* 49:4, pp. 1333–1355.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000205>
- *  Blumenau, Jack, Timothy Hicks and Raluca L. Pahontu (2023). 'Risk and Health Policy Preferences: Evidence from the UK Covid19 Crisis'. *British Journal of Political Science* 53:3, pp. 1070–1080.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123422000539>
- * Meltzer, Allan H. and Scott F. Richard (1981). 'A Rational Theory of the Size of Government'. *Journal of Political Economy* 89:5, pp. 914–927.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1830813>
URL: <http://tinyurl.com/k228ees>
- * Rogowski, Ronald (1987a). 'Political Cleavages and Changing Exposure to Trade'. *American Political Science Review* 81:4, 1121–1137.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1962581>
URL: <http://rochelleterman.com/ir/sites/default/files/Rogowski%201987.pdf>.
(Retrieved 13/07/2026)
- * Lupu, Noam and Jonas Pontusson (2011). 'The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution'. *American Political Science Review* 105:02, pp. 316–336.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000128>
URL: http://www.noamlupu.com/structure_inequality.pdf
- * Rehm, Philipp, Jacob S. Hacker and Mark Schlessinger (2012). 'Insecure Alliances: Risk, Inequality, and Support for the Welfare State'. *American Political Science Review* 106:2, pp. 386–406.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000147>
- * Kitschelt, Herbert and Philipp Rehm (2014). 'Occupations as a Site of Political Preference Formation'. *Comparative Political Studies* 47:12, pp. 1670–1706.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013516066>
- * Rueda, David (2018). 'Food Comes First, Then Morals: Redistribution Preferences, Parochial Altruism, and Immigration in Western Europe'. *Journal of Politics* 80:1, pp. 225–239.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/694201>
- *  O'Grady, Tom (2019). 'How do Economic Circumstances Determine Preferences? Evidence from Long-run Panel Data'. *British Journal of Political Science* 49:4, pp. 1381–1406.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000242>
- * Scheve, Kenneth and David Stasavage (2023). 'Equal Treatment and the Inelasticity of Tax Policy to Rising Inequality'. *Comparative Political Studies* 56:4, pp. 435–464.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140221108415>
- * Blumenau, Jack, Timothy Hicks and Raluca L. Pahontu (2023). 'Risk and Health Policy Preferences: Evidence from the UK Covid19 Crisis'. *British Journal of Political Science* 53:3, pp. 1070–1080.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123422000539>
- *  Blumenau, Jack, Timothy Hicks, Alan M. Jacobs, J. Scott Matthews and Tom O'Grady (2025). 'The Nonconsequences of COVID-19 on Left–Right Ideological Beliefs'. *Journal of Politics* 87:3, pp. 1124–1139.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/732993>

– Representation:

- * Bawn, Kathleen and Frances Rosenbluth (2006). ‘Short versus Long Coalitions: Electoral Accountability and the Size of the Public Sector’. *American Journal of Political Science* 50:2, pp. 251–265
- * Hibbs, Douglas A. (1977). ‘Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy’. *American Political Science Review* 71:4, pp. 1467–1487.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1961490>
URL: <http://www.douglas-hibbs.com/HibbsArticles/APSR-1977.pdf>. (Retrieved 09/09/2020)
- * Rogowski, Ronald (1987b). ‘Trade and the Variety of Democratic Institutions’. *International Organization* 41:2, 203–223.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027442>
- * Boix, Carles (1998). *Political Parties, Growth and Equality: Conservative and Social Democratic Economic Strategies in the World Economy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- * Persson, Torsten and Guido Tabellini (2005). *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
URL: <http://tinyurl.com/pzcrrv8>
- * Rueda, David (2005). ‘Insider–Outsider Politics in Industrialized Democracies: The Challenge to Social Democratic Parties’. *American Political Science Review* 99:1, pp. 61–74.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540505149X>
- * Iversen, Torben and David Soskice (2006). ‘Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Redistribute More Than Others’. *American Political Science Review* 100:2, pp. 165–181.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055406062083>
URL: <https://websites.harvard.edu/iversen/files/2022/09/Iversen-Soskice2005.pdf>. (Retrieved 21/08/2026)
- * Rehm, Philipp (2011). ‘Social Policy by Popular Demand’. *World Politics* 63:2, pp. 271–299.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887111000037>
- * Ansell, Ben (2014). ‘The Political Economy of Ownership: Housing Markets and the Welfare State’. *American Political Science Review* 108:2, pp. 383–402.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055414000045>
- * Vlandas, Tim (2017). ‘Grey power and the Economy: Aging and Inflation Across Advanced Economies’. *Comparative Political Studies* 51:4, pp. 514–552.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017710261>

- Applied:

- Garside, Susanna and Haoyu Zhai (2022). ‘If not now, when? Climate disaster and the Green vote following the 2021 Germany floods’. *Research & Politics* 9:4.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680221141523>
-  McNeil, Andrew and Lucy Barnes (2025). ‘The environment–economic growth trade-off: does support for environmental protection depend on its economic consequences?’ *Ecological Economics* 230, p. 108522.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2025.108522>
- Bradley, Max, Rens Chazottes, Susanna Garside and Nina Lopez-Uroz (2026). ‘Educational policies can strengthen climate coalitions’. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 123:20.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2533821123>

- Gazmararian, Alexander F. and Helen V. Milner (2024). ‘Political Cleavages and Changing Exposure to Global Warming’. *Comparative Political Studies* 58:9, pp. 1965–1999.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241283014>
- Gazmararian, Alexander F. and Helen V. Milner (2026b). ‘Experience and self-interest: Diverging responses to global warming’. *American Journal of Political Science*.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.70061>
- Gazmararian, Alexander F. and Helen V. Milner (2026a). *Climate Fault Lines: The New Political Economy of a Warming World*. Princeton University Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691268989>
- Bayer, Patrick and Johannes Urpelainen (2016). ‘It Is All about Political Incentives: Democracy and the Renewable Feed-in Tariff’. *Journal of Politics* 78:2, pp. 603–619.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/684791>
- Mildenberger, Matto and Anthony Leiserowitz (2017). ‘Public opinion on climate change: Is there an economy–environment tradeoff?’ *Environmental Politics* 26:5, pp. 801–824.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2017.1322275>
- Hazlett, Chad and Matto Mildenberger (2020). ‘Wildfire Exposure Increases Pro-Environment Voting within Democratic but Not Republican Areas’. *American Political Science Review* 114:4, pp. 1359–1365.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055420000441>
- Baccini, Leonardo and Lucas Leemann (2021). ‘Do natural disasters help the environment? How voters respond and what that means’. *Political Science Research and Methods* 9:3, pp. 468–484.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2020.25>
-  Finnegan, Jared J. (2023). ‘Changing Prices in a Changing Climate: Electoral Competition and Fossil Fuel Taxation’. *Comparative Political Studies* 56:8, pp. 1257–1290.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140221141853>

3 Organisational Interests and Representation

In this topic, we extend the approach to preference representation beyond the purely electoral sphere, considering how interests can become *organised* (or not!) and then have influence on policy-making. Olson provides the foundational theoretical structure, while Culpepper offers an account (and application) that integrates with mass/electoral politics. The climate/energy applications draw lessons from the US case (Stokes) and a more internationally-comparative analysis (Mildenberger). N.b. for the purposes of preparing for the weekly class, you *may* choose between the Stokes and Mildenberger readings. However, *both* of these readings are deemed “Required” for the purposes of possible exam content.

Portfolio Prompts

- Using material beyond the reading lists, describe a case where organised interests have apparently been successful in influencing policy choice. How confident are you in that causal attribution?
- Find a news story from the past seven days (from a country of your choosing). Describe how the contents of that story can be related to the theoretical arguments of either or both of Olson (1982) and Culpepper (2011).

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Olson, Mancur (1982). *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, Chapters 1 and 3
URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nprdd> (Retrieved 03/09/2026)
 - Culpepper, Pepper D. (2011). *Quiet Politics and Business Power*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09780511760716>
- Applied:
 - Stokes, Leah Cardamore (2020). *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 2
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190074258.001.0001>

OR

- Mildenberger, Matto (2020). *Carbon Captured: How Business and Labor Control Climate Politics*. MIT Press. Chapters 1 and 2
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12393.001.0001>
-  Finnegan, Jared J. (2022). ‘Institutions, Climate Change, and the Foundations of Long-Term Policymaking’. *Comparative Political Studies* 55:7, pp. 1198–1235.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211047416>

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:

- Golden, Miriam (1993). ‘The Dynamics of Trade Unionism and National Economic Performance’. *American Political Science Review* 87:2, pp. 437–454
- Mares, Isabela (2003). ‘The Sources of Business Interest in Social Insurance: Sectoral versus National Differences’. *World Politics* 55:02, pp. 229–258.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2003.0012>
- Woll, Cornelia (2016). ‘Politics in the Interest of Capital: A Not-So-Organized Combat’. *Politics & Society* 44:3, pp. 373–391.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329216655318>
- Cameron, David R. (1984). ‘Social Democracy, Corporatism, Labour Quiescence and the Representation of Economic Interest in Advanced Capitalist Society’. In: *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism*. Ed. by John H. Goldthorpe. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Chap. 7, 143–178
- Katzenstein, Peter J. (1985). *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrf8crm>. (Retrieved 08/09/2026)
- Swenson, Peter (1991). ‘Bringing Capital Back in, or Social Democracy Reconsidered: Employer Power, Cross-Class Alliances, and Centralization of Industrial Relations in Denmark and Sweden’. *World Politics* 43:4, pp. 513–544.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010535>
URL: http://khosachonline.ucoz.com/_ld/0/36_Swenson1991-bri.pdf. (Retrieved 03/09/2015)
- Calmfors, Lars and John Driffill (1988). ‘Bargaining Structure, Corporatism and Macroeconomic Performance’. *Economic Policy* 3:6, 13–61.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1344503>
- Siaroff, Alan (1999). ‘Corporatism in 24 industrial democracies: Meaning and measurement’. *European Journal of Political Research* 36:2, pp. 175–205.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007048820297>
- Molina, Oscar and Martin Rhodes (2002). ‘Corporatism: The Past, Present, and Future of a Concept’. *Annual Review of Political Science* 5, pp. 305–331.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.5.112701.184858>
- Culpepper, Pepper D. and Aidan Regan (2014). ‘Why don’t governments need trade unions anymore? The death of social pacts in Ireland and Italy’. *Socio-Economic Review*.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwt028>
- Applied:
 - Kennard, Amanda (2020). ‘The Enemy of My Enemy: When Firms Support Climate Change Regulation’. *International Organization* 74:2, pp. 187–221.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818320000107>
 - Cheon, Andrew and Johannes Urpelainen (2013). ‘How do Competing Interest Groups Influence Environmental Policy? The Case of Renewable Electricity in Industrialized Democracies, 1989–2007’. *Political Studies* 61:4, pp. 874–897.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12006>
 - Aklin, Michaël and Johannes Urpelainen (2018). *Renewables: The Politics of a Global Energy Transition*. MIT Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11112.001.0001>

- Meckling, Jonas and Jonas Nahm (2018). ‘When do states disrupt industries? Electric cars and the politics of innovation’. *Review of International Political Economy* 25:4, pp. 505–529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2018.1434810>
- Meckling, Jonas and Jonas Nahm (2022). ‘Strategic State Capacity: How States Counter Opposition to Climate Policy’. *Comparative Political Studies* 55:3, pp. 493–523. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211024308>

4 Macro Political Economy Configurations

One of the more distinctive approaches adopted within the subfield of comparative political economy involves seeking to conceive of, and theorise, how the macroeconomy, together with its associated institutions (e.g. regulating labour markets, financial markets, corporate markets, and consumer markets), operate as a system – or indeed how they can operate as quite different types of system. We explore two of these macro-level political economy approaches in this topic – “Varieties of Capitalism” (VoC) and “Growth Models” – before trying to apply them to the case of the energy transition.

Portfolio Prompts

- Describe whether and how either the “varieties of capitalism” and/or “growth model” concepts help us to understand a country/economy of your choosing.

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Hall, Peter A. and David Soskice (2001a). ‘An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism’. In: *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Ed. by Peter A. Hall and David Soskice. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Chap. 1, pp. 1–68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199247757.003.0001>
 - Baccaro, Lucio and Jonas Pontusson (2016). ‘Rethinking Comparative Political Economy: The Growth Model Perspective’. *Politics & Society* 44:2, pp. 219–252. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329216638053>
- Applied:
 - Četković, Stefan and Aron Buzogány (2016). ‘Varieties of capitalism and clean energy transitions in the European Union: When renewable energy hits different economic logics’. *Climate Policy* 16:5, pp. 642–657. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1135778>
 - Nahm, Jonas (2022). ‘Green Growth Models’. In: ed. by Lucio Baccaro, Mark Blyth and Jonas Pontusson. Oxford University Press. Chap. 17, pp. 443–464. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197607855.003.0018>

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Iversen, Torben and Anne Wren (1998). ‘Equality, Employment, and Budgetary Restraint: The Trilemma of the Service Economy’. *World Politics* 50:4, pp. 507–546. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1998.0018>
 - Estevez-Abe, Margarita, Torben Iversen and David Soskice (2001). ‘Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State’. In: *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Ed. by Peter A. Hall and David Soskice. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Chap. 4, pp. 145–183. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199247757.003.0004>
 - Martin, Cathie Jo and Duane Swank (2004). ‘Does the Organization of Capital Matter? Employers and Active Labor Market Policy at the National and Firm Levels’. *American Political Science Review* 98:4, pp. 593–611

- Martin, Cathie Jo and Kathleen Thelen (2007). ‘The State and Coordinated Capitalism: Contributions of the Public Sector to Social Solidarity in Postindustrial Societies’. *World Politics* 60:1, pp. 1–36.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.0.0000>
- Busemeyer, Marius R. and Christine Trampusch, eds. (2012). *The Political Economy of Collective Skill Formation*.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199599431.001.0001>
- Johnston, Alison and Aidan Regan (2015). ‘European Monetary Integration and the Incompatibility of National Varieties of Capitalism’. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 54:2, pp. 318–336.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12289>
- Kenworthy, Lane (2006). ‘Institutional coherence and macroeconomic performance’. *Socio-Economic Review* 4:1, pp. 69–.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/SER/mwj032>
- Hope, David and David Soskice (2016). ‘Growth Models, Varieties of Capitalism, and Macroeconomics’. *Politics & Society* 44:2, pp. 209–226.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329216638054>
- Behringer, Jan and Till van Treeck (2021). ‘Varieties of capitalism and growth regimes: the role of income distribution’. *Socio-Economic Review* 20:3, pp. 1249–1286.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwab032>
- Baccaro, Lucio, Mark Blyth and Jonas Pontusson, eds. (2022). *Diminishing Returns: The New Politics of Growth and Stagnation*. Oxford University Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197607855.001.0001>
- Applied:
 - Mikler, John and Neil E. Harrison (2012). ‘Varieties of Capitalism and Technological Innovation for Climate Change Mitigation’. *New Political Economy* 17:2, pp. 179–208.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2011.552106>
 - Jordán, Felipe (2025). ‘Varieties of capitalism and environmental performance’. *Ecological Economics* 227, p. 108362.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108362>
 - Kupzok, Nils and Jonas Nahm (2025). ‘Green macrofinancial bargains: how economic interests enable and limit climate action’. *Review of International Political Economy* 32:3, pp. 569–592.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2025.2453502>
 - Cigna, Luca, Donato Di Carlo and Niccolò Durazzi (2026). ‘The Comparative Political Economy of the Green Transition: Economic Specializations and Skills Regimes in Europe’. *Regulation & Governance* 20:2, pp. 544–559.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.70080>

5 Solutions? Consensus vs. Imposition

We have studied societal preferences and their aggregation and representation. As insightful as those approaches are, they fall short of providing a convincing political economy answer to how a successful energy transition might be achieved. Are there plausible “solutions” to the challenge we face? In this final topic of this section of the module, we compare and contrast two quite distinct types of political strategy: those seeking to build broad and consensual coalitions of support and those seeking to construct narrower majorities via the imposition of costs on minorities that create new political economy realities. Which (if either), offers the greater chance of policy success for the energy transition? And does the answer vary in different political context?

Portfolio Prompts

- From a policy area and jurisdiction of your choosing, summarise a situation where you could reasonably describe political/economic costs being imposed on a concentrated minority, to the benefit of a diffuse majority.

Short/Popular Readings

- “” Roberts, David and Ramón Méndez Galain (10th July 2026). *He helped Uruguay decarbonize. Can he help other countries do the same? A conversation with Ramón Méndez Galain.* Volts.wtf
URL: <https://www.volts.wtf/p/he-helped-uruguay-decarbonize-can>. (Retrieved 20/07/2026)
- “” Roberts, David and Todd Tucker (28th Aug. 2026). *Could we use Trump’s tricks to make good green policy?* Volts.wtf
URL: <https://www.volts.wtf/p/could-we-use-trumps-tricks-to-make>. (Retrieved 22/09/2026)

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Pierson, Paul (2000). ‘Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics’. *American Political Science Review* 94:2, pp. 251–267.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011>
 -   Barnes, Lucy and Timothy Hicks (2027). *Popular Austerity: Public Opinion and the Politics of Fiscal Balance*. Oxford University Press. Forthcoming, Chapters 1 and 2
- Applied:
 -  Bolet, Diane, Fergus Green and Mikel González-Eguino (2024). ‘How to Get Coal Country to Vote for Climate Policy: The Effect of a “Just Transition Agreement” on Spanish Election Results’. *American Political Science Review* 118:3, pp. 1344–1359.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055423001235>
 - Gaikwad, Nikhar, Federica Genovese and Dustin Tingley (2022). ‘Creating Climate Coalitions: Mass Preferences for Compensating Vulnerability in the World’s Two Largest Democracies’. *American Political Science Review* 116:4, pp. 1165–1183.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055422000223>

- Kupzok, Nils and Jonas Nahm (2024). ‘The Decarbonization Bargain: How the Decarbonizable Sector Shapes Climate Politics’. *Perspectives on Politics* 22:4, pp. 1203–1223.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592724000951>
- Mildenberger, Matto (2020). *Carbon Captured: How Business and Labor Control Climate Politics*. MIT Press. Chapter 8
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12393.001.0001>

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:

- Golden, Miriam and Brian Min (2013). ‘Distributive Politics Around the World’. *Annual Review of Political Science* 16:1, pp. 73–99.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052209-121553>
- Pierson, Paul (2004). *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Capoccia, Giovanni and R. Daniel Kelemen (2007). ‘The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism’. *World Politics* 59:3, pp. 341–369.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2007.0025>
- Jacobs, Alan M. (2011). *Governing for the Long Term: Democracy and the Politics of Investment*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. especially chapters 1, 2, and 11
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09780511921766>
- Juhász, Réka and Nathan Lane (2024). ‘The Political Economy of Industrial Policy’. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 38:4, pp. 27–54.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.38.4.27>

- Applied:

- Allan, Bentley, Joanna I. Lewis and Thomas Oatley (2021). ‘Green Industrial Policy and the Global Transformation of Climate Politics’. *Global Environmental Politics* 21:4, pp. 1–19.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00640
-  Meckling, Jonas, Phillip Y. Lipsky, Jared J. Finnegan and Florence Metz (2022). ‘Why nations lead or lag in energy transitions’. *Science* 378:6615, pp. 31–33.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adc9973>
- Bistline, John et al. (2023). ‘Emissions and energy impacts of the Inflation Reduction Act’. *Science* 380:6652, pp. 1324–1327.
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009405331>
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III Challenge 2: Preserving democracy in the age of automation and AI

The second challenge we explore in this block of the module is motivated by two important concerns emerging with the advent of commercially scalable AI. On the one hand, the possibility of higher unemployment as AI becomes able to perform the jobs of many workers. On the other hand, the possibility that AI is used for mass surveillance by both companies and governments. These outcomes have the potential of changing the distribution of both economic and political power between workers and economic elites, fueling political instability and regime change.

We investigate the implications of AI by focusing ourselves on workers' ability to organize and mobilize in and outside of the work place. We use workers as the vehicle to investigate this challenge because they shape political and policy outcomes through their capacity to vote and hold governments accountable. We also explore how economic elites use their economic power to shape political and policy outcomes, including workers' ability to organize and mobilize.

In adopting this challenge as the focus for this block, we investigate how changes to the distribution of economic and political power between workers and economic elites shapes institutional outcomes such as democratization and even the possibility of democratic backsliding. Even if you are sceptical about the ability of AI to generate the aforementioned outcomes, it is a useful case to understand how economic transformation has affected both politics and policy.

6 Defining the Challenge

The purpose of this topic is to go into some detail on the consequences of workers' ability to organize and mobilize to generate democratic institutions. In doing so we consider how has the advent of AI shaped the discourse on the related political consequences of this technology. We will challenge the view that technological progress is always a social good because it increases productivity; instead we will consider how societal outcomes are shaped by the distribution of power between workers and economic elites.

We also pair two widely discussed predictions for the impact of AI: generating widespread unemployment and increasing the capacity for mass surveillance, with general theoretical insights speaking to the role of economic and political inequality on institutional outcomes. In our discussions we will connect widespread unemployment to the possibility of political instability by engendering Neo-Luddism; we will connect the possibility of mass surveillance to authoritarianism.

Portfolio Prompts

- Reflect on the extent to which you consider the general public today could revolt like the 19th century Luddites in England. (Short-form.)
- Identify an event taking place in the 21st century, in any country, that led to successful mobilization from workers and subsequent regime change or a major change in policy by the government. Why was it successful? Focus only on the aspect you find most persuasive. (Research memo.)

Short/Popular Readings

- “” Fox, Mike (13th Aug. 2026). *The Digital Panopticon: Why Automated Surveillance Threatens a Free Society*. Cato at Liberty, Cato Institute
URL: <https://www.cato.org/blog/digital-panopticon-why-automated-surveillance-threatens-free-society>. (Retrieved 28/09/2026)

- Magistro, Beatrice, Sophie Borwein, R. Michael Alvarez, Bart Bonikowski and Peter John Loewen (2025). ‘Attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) and globalization: Common microfoundations and political implications’. *American Journal of Political Science*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12959>

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A Robinson and Pierre Yared (2009). ‘Reevaluating the modernization hypothesis’. *Journal of Monetary Economics* 56:8, pp. 1043–1058. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmoneco.2009.10.002>.
 - Ansell, Ben W and David J Samuels (2014). *Inequality and democratization: An elite-competition approach*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09780511843686>. Chapters 1 to 4.
- Applied:
 - Frey, Carl Benedikt (2019). *The technology trap: Capital, labor, and power in the age of automation*. Princeton University Press
URL: <https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691172798/the-technology-trap>. Chapters 11.
 - Bloom, Peter (2023). *Authoritarian capitalism in the age of globalization*. Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802204612>. Chapters 3 to 5.

Further Readings

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 - Lipset, Seymour Martin (1959). ‘Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy’. *American political science review* 53:1, pp. 69–105.
 - Schelling, Thomas C (1980). *The Strategy of Conflict: with a new Preface by the Author*. Harvard university press.
 - Przeworski, Adam and John Sprague (1986). *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
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 - Higley, John and Michael G Burton (2006). *Elite foundations of liberal democracy*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC
 - Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson (2006). *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09780511510809>. Chapters 1 to 3.
 - Haggard, Stephan and Robert R Kaufman (2016). *Dictators and democrats: Masses, elites, and regime change*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 to 5.
- Applied:

- Xu, Xu, Genia Kostka and Xun Cao (2022). ‘Information Control and Public Support for Social Credit Systems in China’. *Journal of Politics* 84:4, pp. 2230–2245.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/718358>
- Earl, Jennifer, Thomas V. Maher and Jennifer Pan (2022). ‘The digital repression of social movements, protest, and activism: A synthetic review’. *Science Advances* 8:10, eabl8198.
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42256-019-0114-4>
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URL: <https://bit.ly/3DR0bF1>
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1257/aeri.20190385>
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7 Money in politics and unequal political power

The well functioning of democratic institutions depends on the ability of citizens to shape policy and hold politicians accountable. However the political power of citizens to shape outcomes is unequal. In democracies, not all votes count equally. Economic elites can use their economic resources to influence institutions via campaign donations, lobbying, and other means. This subverts democratic institutions because the policy preferences of the majority of workers lose weight in the policy making process vis-à-vis those of the economic elite; if money buys political influence, then investing more money in quid pro quo politics guarantees more influence in policy outcomes. Workers, in general, have less economic resources than elites.

In this topic we will observe that money in politics acts as a source of economic power, that translates into political power. We exemplify this issue noting that the share that workers own of the growing economic pie—thanks to automation—has been declining in recent decades. Indeed, although automation—like AI—can make the pie bigger, it has manifested in increased returns to capital while the labor share continues to decline.

Portfolio Prompts

- Reflect on the extent to which the British government has addressed the backlash against data centers being built in the UK. (Short form.)
- Identify a recent policy in the UK (national or local) where business' interests and the public's diverged. Whose interests were especially represented in the actions taken by the government? Why? (Research memo.)

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 -  Grossman, Gene M. and Elhanan Helpman (1994). 'Protection for Sale'. *The American Economic Review* 84:4, pp. 833–850.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.89.5.1135>
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URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7s1jn>.
- Applied:
 -   Balcázar, Carlos Felipe (2025). 'A theory of redistributive conflict for the age of automation'. *Available at SSRN* 5139262.
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 - Piketty, Thomas (2014). *Capital in the twenty-first century*. Harvard University Press, Chapters 6, 9 and 10
URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wpqbc>.

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Beviá, Carmen and Luis Corchón (2024). *Contests: theory and applications*. Cambridge University Press

- Tullock, Gordon (1967). ‘The Welfare Costs of Tariffs, Monopolies, and Theft’. *Western Economic Journal* 5:3, pp. 224–232.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-7295.1967.tb01923.x>
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- Congleton, Roger D, Arye L Hillman and Kai A Konrad (2008). *editors, The theory of rent seeking: Forty years of research*
- Acemoglu, Daron and James A Robinson (2008). ‘Persistence of power, elites, and institutions’. *American Economic Review* 98:1, pp. 267–293
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M De Figueiredo and James M Snyder Jr (2003). ‘Why is there so little money in US politics?’ *Journal of Economic perspectives* 17:1, pp. 105–130
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- Applied:
 - Kristal, Tali (2010). ‘Good times, bad times: Postwar labor’s share of national income in capitalist democracies’. *American sociological review* 75:5, pp. 729–763.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122410382>
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 - Narula, Rajneesh (2014). *Globalization and technology: Interdependence, innovation systems and industrial policy*. John Wiley & Sons.
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 - Bombardini, Matilde, Olimpia Cutinelli Rendina and Francesco Trebbi (2021). *Lobbying behind the frontier*. Tech. rep. National Bureau of Economic Research
 - Boix, Carles (2019). *Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads: Technological Change and the Future of Politics*. Princeton University Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691191843>.
 - Philippon, Thomas (2023). *The Great Reversal. How America Gave Up on Free Markets (excerpt)*. Harvard University Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674243095>
 - Autor, David, David Dorn, Lawrence F Katz, Christina Patterson and John Van Reenen (2020). ‘The fall of the labor share and the rise of superstar firms’. *The Quarterly journal of economics* 135:2, pp. 645–709.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjaa004>
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129221119206>
- Huber, Evelyne and John D. Stephens (2024). *Challenging Inequality: Variation across Postindustrial Societies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Karabarbounis, Loukas (2024). ‘Perspectives on the labor share’. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 38:2, pp. 107–136.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.38.2.107>

8 The rise of populism and democratic backsliding

Automation has not yet lead political instability by generating widespread unemployment. Instead, those workers affected by automation have blamed others – such as the international community and immigrants – increasing their support for far-right parties, economic nationalism, and even strong-man authoritarianism. Many workers have sought to address declining economic outcomes and higher economic uncertainty due to the many sources of global economic change, like automation, by supporting populist politicians that by definition represent the preferences of well-defined group of citizens (the *demos*, the people) at the expense of others, which are deemed unworthy of political representation.

In this topic we investigate the puzzling absence of a widespread backlash on machines and their owners, and the role that economic shocks such as automation have had on shifting voters' preferences toward the far-right and more authoritarian practices. In this week we discuss why democracies can backslide into authoritarianism and how economic transformation can make this happen.

Portfolio Prompts

- Do you think that economic nationalism effectively addresses workers' economic grievances? (Short form.)
- Think about today's right-wing populism. How does it differ from the left-wing populism observed in Latin America in the 20th century (e.g., Peronismo or Chavismo or other)? Do they share common traits? (Research memo.)

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. oxford university Press.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780190234874.001.0001>
 - Colantone, Italo, Gianmarco I. P. Ottaviano and Piero Stanig (2022). 'The Backlash of Globalization'. In: *Handbook of International Economics*. Ed. by Gita Gopinath, Elhanan Helpman and Kenneth Rogoff. Vol. 5. Elsevier, pp. 405–477.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.hesint.2022.02.007>
- Applied:
 - Gallego, Aina and Thomas Kurer (2022). 'Automation, Digitalization, and Artificial Intelligence in the Workplace: Implications for Political Behavior'. *Annual Review of Political Science* 25, pp. 463–484.
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 - Ballard-Rosa, Cameron, Mashail A Malik, Stephanie J Rickard and Kenneth Scheve (2021). 'The economic origins of authoritarian values: Evidence from local trade shocks in the United Kingdom'. *Comparative Political Studies* 54:13, pp. 2321–2353.
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Further Readings

- General Political Economy:

- Hays, Jude, Junghyun Lim and Jae-Jae Spoon (2019). ‘The path from trade to right-wing populism in Europe’. *Electoral Studies* 60, p. 102038
- Jardina, Ashley (2019). ‘White identity politics’
- Inglehart, Ronald F and Pippa Norris (2016). ‘Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash’
- Kazin, Michael (1998). *The populist persuasion: An American history*. Cornell University Press
- Dornbusch, Rudiger and Sebastian Edwards, eds. (2007). *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
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- Rodrik, Dani (2018). ‘Populism and the economics of globalization’. *Journal of international business policy* 1:1, pp. 12–33.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-018-0001-4>.
- *The Backlash against Globalization: What’s Next?* (2022). Conference Report. Niehaus Center for Globalization & Governance, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University
URL: <https://niehaus.princeton.edu/backlash-against-globalization-what%E2%80%99s-next>
- Svolik, Milan W, Elena Avramovska, Johanna Lutz and Filip Milačić (2023). ‘In Europe, democracy erodes from the right’. *Journal of Democracy* 34:1, pp. 5–20
- Graham, Matthew H and Milan W Svolik (2020). ‘Democracy in America? Partisanship, polarization, and the robustness of support for democracy in the United States’. *American political science review* 114:2, pp. 392–409
- Piketty, Thomas (2020). *Capital and ideology*. Harvard University Press, Introduction, optional. Chapters 11 and 13 to 15.
- Guriev, Sergei and Elias Papaioannou (2022). ‘The political economy of populism’. *Journal of Economic literature* 60:3, pp. 753–832
- Applied:
 - Wu, Nicole (2022). ‘Misattributed blame? Attitudes toward globalization in the age of automation’. *Political Science Research and Methods* 10:3, pp. 470–487.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2021.43>.
 - Zhang, Baobao (2022). ‘No rage against the machines: Threat of automation does not change policy preferences’. In: *AIES 2022 - Proceedings of the 2022 AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society*, pp. 856–866.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3514094.3534179>
 - Menon, Anil and Baobao Zhang (2025). ‘Future shock or future shrug? Public responses to varied artificial intelligence development timelines’. *Journal of Politics*.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/739200>
 - Gallego, Aina, Thomas Kurer and Nikolas Schöll (2022). ‘Neither Left Behind nor Superstar: Ordinary Winners of Digitalization at the Ballot Box’. *Journal of Politics* 84:1, pp. 418–436.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/714920>

- 🧠 Gonzalez-Rostani, Valentina (2024). ‘The Path from Automation to Populist Political Behavior’
URL: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/mogw30ospxjxly8yq83n/GonzalezRostani%7B%5C_%7DAutomation%7B%5C_%7DCulture.pdf?rlkey=z1xnbshieecez6f6qkamksh5p%7B%5C%7Ddl=0%7B%5C%7D0Ahttps://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/pb0iwiznpx1e770wd2vdr/Gonzalez-Rostani.-2024.-The-Path-from-Automation-to-Populist.pdf?rlkey=07
- Magistro, Beatrice, Sophie Borwein, R. Michael Alvarez, Bart Bonikowski and Peter John Loewen (2026). ‘Attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) and globalization: Common microfoundations and political implications’. *American Journal of Political Science* 70:1, pp. 348–365.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12959>
- Wu, Nicole and Zhongwei Sun (2025). ‘Little to Lose: Exit Options and Attitudes towards Automation in Chinese Manufacturing’. *China Quarterly* 262, pp. 371–391.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741024001577>
- Kurer, Thomas and Bruno Palier (2019). ‘Shrinking and shouting: the political revolt of the declining middle in times of employment polarization’. *Research & Politics* 6:1.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168019831164>
- Autor, David, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson and Kaveh Majlesi (2020). ‘Importing political polarization? The electoral consequences of rising trade exposure’. *American Economic Review* 110:10, pp. 3139–3183
- 🧠 Anelli, Massimo, Italo Colantone and Piero Stanig (2021). ‘Individual vulnerability to industrial robot adoption increases support for the radical right’. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118:47, e2111611118.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2111611118>.
- 🧠 Baccini, Leonardo and Stephen Weymouth (2021). ‘Gone for Good: Deindustrialization, White Voter Backlash, and US Presidential Voting’. *American Political Science Review* 115:2, pp. 550–567.
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- 🧠 Chaudoin, Stephen and Michael-David Mangini (2025). ‘Robots, Foreigners, and Foreign Robots: Policy Responses to Automation and Trade’. *The Journal of Politics*.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/737849>.
- Resources on the tasks-based approach to automation:
 - * Autor, David H (2013). ‘The “task approach” to labor markets: an overview’. *Journal for Labour Market Research* 46:3, pp. 185–199
 - * Acemoglu, Daron and Pascual Restrepo (2019). ‘Automation and new tasks: How technology displaces and reinstates labor’. *Journal of economic perspectives* 33:2, pp. 3–30.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.2.3>
 - * 🧠 Acemoglu, Daron and Pascual Restrepo (2020). ‘Robots and jobs: Evidence from US labor markets’. *Journal of political economy* 128:6, pp. 2188–2244
 - * 🧠 Acemoglu, Daron and Pascual Restrepo (2022). ‘Tasks, automation, and the rise in US wage inequality’. *Econometrica* 90:5, pp. 1973–2016

9 Job polarization and collective action from labor

Sources of automation, like AI, and other sources of economic change have created winners and losers among workers. We observed in the last topic that the losers are more likely to support far-right populism, while the winners are less likely to do so. In this topic we will investigate if worker polarization can undermine workers ability to organize and mobilize politically. To do so we will focus our attention in labor unions. Union activities have created venues for workers to obtain better job conditions in the face of rapid economic change via collective bargaining agreements. Further, unions have historically assisted workers in participating politically to push for redistributive policies that benefit them, and to hold legislators accountable when they do not support these policies. In this topic we will investigate how economic change has affected the political power of organized labor.

Portfolio Prompts

- If unions were to disappear, are there alternatives to create effective and sustained social mobilization to push for economic policy that benefits workers? (Short form.)
- Reflect on the role of shop floors v. social media in facilitating collective action. Can social media replace shop floors for generating labor organization? (Research memo.)

Required Readings

- General Political Economy:
 - Ahlquist, John and Margaret Levi (2013). *In the interests of others: Leaders, governance, and political activism in membership organizations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691158563.001.0001>
 - Kaplan, Ethan and Suresh Naidu (2025). ‘Between Government and Market: The Political Economics of Labor Unions’. *Annual Review of Economics* 17:1, pp. 367–396. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-051520-025251>
- Applied:
 - Farber, Henry S, Daniel Herbst, Ilyana Kuziemko and Suresh Naidu (2021). ‘Unions and inequality over the twentieth century: New evidence from survey data’. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136:3, pp. 1325–1385. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjab012>
 -  Balcazar, Carlos Felipe (2023). ‘Globalization, Unions and Robots: The Effects of Automation on the Power of Labor and Policymaking’. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4574527>.

Further Readings

- General Political Economy:
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10 Solutions? Reducing the opportunity costs of collective action

The foundation of a good democracy is (equal) political participation. However, we have observed during the past four weeks how the distribution of economic and political power of workers and firms determines policy outcomes, and how automation can shape the both the preferences and the capacity of workers to organizer and mobilize. In particular, we determined that when the opportunity cost of collective action is high, workers are less likely to participate in union activity, which in turn undermines their political power.

In this week we investigate various alternatives that can improve democratic outcomes while reducing the opportunity cost of participating in collective action from labor, like cooperatives, advocacy groups, and even (de)centralized communication using information technologies.

Portfolio Prompts

- Would you advocate for a traditional union agreement, a cooperative or another type of agreement with workers for increasing a company's yearly earnings? (Short form.)
- Have gig workers been effective at pushing for better working conditions? Choose a case of interest (e.g., Uber, Upwork, TaskRabbit, Doordash, etc.) (Research memo.)

Short/Popular Readings

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