ECON 380–601: Economies in Transition  
Summer 2024 (Tuesday, June 4th – Tuesday, July 26th)

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Email Address: anoblitt@gmu.edu

Monday (asynchronous)  
Tuesday (5 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.)  
Friday (10 A.M. –11:30 A.M.)

Course Location: Class Room to be determined, Arlington Campus, GMU

Office Hours: Appointment upon request

COURSE STRUCTURE:  
This is a course consisting of a combination of in-person as well as asynchronous lectures and discussion. Each week there will be two synchronous class meetings, which will be held in-person and one asynchronous lecture posted online. The synchronous class meetings will be held on Tuesday (5 P.M.–6:30 P.M.) and Friday (10 A.M.–11:30 A.M). These meetings will be a combination of lecture and open discussion. An asynchronous meeting will be held on Monday, consisting of a recorded lecture, video, or an article that will be posted for you to download through Blackboard.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES:  
This course investigates the foundations of comparative economic systems. Broadly defined, comparative economic systems refers to the study of human interaction under alternative institutional arrangements. The overall objective of this course, therefore, will be to use the basic foundations of economic and institutional analysis to understand, across time and place, how individuals have been able to transition from poverty to wealth. More specifically, however, the focus of study and the particular debates in the field of comparative economic systems has evolved over time across three phases. Before 1989, the core of comparative economics was an examination of the differences in economic, as well as political, performance between capitalism and socialism. During the 1990s and into the early 2000s, the main focus of interest of comparative economists has been the transition from socialism to capitalism. In recent years, mostly as a result of the transition experience of China and India, a new orientation of comparative economics has emerged that focuses on the comparison of the economic effects of the various institutions of capitalism. Both the lectures and assigned readings will reflect the overall scope of this field of study as well as the particular phases of emphasis.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Books  

RECOMMENDED MATERIAL:


The recommended book provides a basic and very intuitive overview of key concepts in the economic way of thinking that will be discussed throughout the course. The content is very accessible and non-technical, and therefore highly recommended, whether or not you have had courses in economics. Although the content will not be directly drawn from this book, its themes and concepts will resonate throughout the required course material.

**Journal Articles and Online Readings**

In addition to the assigned books, there are a number of articles and online readings listed below that are also required reading. I have provided links to the journal articles where available. Otherwise, these additional readings are also made available on the GMU Blackboard webpage for this course.

**COURSE STRUCTURE & GRADING:**

Courses will be a mix of lecture and open discussion. PowerPoint will be used during the lecture, and will be made available on Blackboard, but students are responsible for taking notes.

Your final grade is based on quizzes (20%), a midterm exam (40%), and a final exam (40%). No additional credit is available.

**Quizzes:** There will be 4 quizzes, which will be held every Tuesday at the beginning of class (NOT including June 4th or exam weeks). Each quiz will be based on the readings and class lecture from the previous week. There are no makeup quizzes, and students must be on time to receive a quiz. Once collected, quizzes will not be distributed to latecomers.

**Quiz Dates:**
1. June 11th
2. June 18th
3. June 25th
4. July 16th

**Midterm exam:** The midterm exam will be administered in class on Tuesday, July 2, 2024. The exam will include *all* material covered up until that point in time.

**Final exam:** The final exam will be administered on Friday, July 26, 2024. The final exam is comprehensive and will include *all* material covered throughout the semester.

Your letter grade will be assigned based on the weighted value of your quizzes and exams as follows:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

If you require any special accommodations, please see me immediately following the first class so that we can work together to make sure that you have what you need to succeed in this course.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows:

“To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.”

More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at https://oai.gmu.edu

TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Introduction into Comparative Institutional Analysis (June 4th & June 7th, NO QUIZ)


2. Institutions and Entrepreneurship (June 11th & June 14th)


3. The Socialist Calculation Debate and the Political Economy of Socialism (June 18th & June 21st)


4. The Experiment with Socialism in the Soviet Union and Poland (June 25th & June 28th)


5. Midterm Exam (Tuesday, July 2nd)

6. Friday, July 5th (NO CLASS)

7. The Political Economy of Transition in Post-Soviet Russia and Post-Communist Poland (July 9th)


8. The Chinese Experiment with Socialism and Transitional Political Economy in China (July 12th & 16th)


9. The Political Economy of Socialism in Venezuela (July 19th)

Guest Lecture by Mr. Andrés Guilarte on Venezuela


10. Final Exam (Tuesday, July 23rd)