

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
SPRING 2007 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

Political Economy of Redistribution

Research Directors:

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**Radisson Hotel Denver Stapleton Plaza, Conference Room #
Thursday, May 17 – Sunday, May 20**

This is the first of two workshops designed to help students prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals in their chosen field. The two goals of the first workshop are 1) to map the research field with respect to contributing disciplines, methods, sources, and area knowledge; and 2) to help prepare fellows for their pre-dissertation summer research. (The goal of the second workshop will be to focus on the mechanics and methods of writing a dissertation proposal). The two goals stand in close relation to each other: through a sustained and structured discussion of student proposals and their component parts, we hope to contribute to the mapping of the research field itself.

The main questions driving the research of this group include: Why do some countries or regions redistribute more income than others? What accounts for changes in patterns of redistribution over time? This interdisciplinary research field seeks to answer these questions empirically by applying a range of approaches drawn from political science, economics, sociology, geography and history. By studying “redistribution,” we seek to explain: 1) how individuals cluster in geographic space according to income, class, and political preference; 2) how different political institutions aggregate preferences in different ways; 3) the impact of non-economic issue dimensions on patterns of redistribution; and 4) the role(s) of regime type, factors of production, sectoral politics, exposure to market risks, and asset specificity in explaining patterns of redistribution.

This research field will achieve coherence from a common puzzle and theoretical framework rather than a common set of empirical techniques, although most of our attention in the workshops will be given to the nuts and bolts of doing high quality theory-guided empirical research. Students will focus on different dimensions of the field, using different kinds of empirical data, including: survey research, demographic and political data at the level of census tracts, electoral precincts, counties, and other administrative units, in some cases with the aid of GIS software; large datasets that permit cross-country comparison; quantitative historical data; archives; field experiments and observational designs that approximate quasi-experiments.

The students in the group are drawn from political science, geography, public policy, sociology, and urban planning. All are doing theory-guided empirical research related to the political economy of redistribution in a variety of countries around the world. We expect students to bring to bear their disciplinary knowledge on a specific set of problems while engaging with and learning from complementary approaches to their topics from other disciplines represented in the workshops.

Workshop Readings and Resources

Research Field resources will be placed on the relevant SharePoint websites. Students will receive separate explanations and detailed instructions about the access and use of the DPDF digital platform.

Workshop Assignments

- **May 7, due on DPDF SharePoint site:** A short document (maximum two pages) that answers the following questions:
 - What is your research question?
 - Why is it important and/or interesting?
 - What does the existing literature tell us?
 - What is your central hypothesis or argument?
 - What empirical techniques are you planning to use?
 - What are the key weaknesses in your project thus far? Where do you think you need the most work?
- **By the beginning of the workshop:** Prepare a 15 minute presentation of your project based on your answers to the questions above.
- **By the beginning of the workshop:** Read all other responses to the assignment above, and be prepared to discuss and comment on the other projects.

SAMPLE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL, Wednesday, May 16: Reading handouts / packets will be distributed at registration along with other materials.

Wednesday Evening: *Reception, 6-8 pm.*

Session 1: Introduction and Purpose of Workshops

(Thursday, 9 AM – 12:30 PM)

Plenary Session: Presentations by Program Director Peter Sahlins and the Research Directors

Session 2: Asking Questions and Developing Hypotheses

(Thursday, 1:30 PM – 4 PM)

This session provides an overview of the field. What are the key questions, and why are they important? What are the key theories, arguments, and hypotheses in the literature? How do the students' proposals aim to contribute?

This session will feature interactive presentations by the research directors, and students will provide brief introductions to their projects.

Session 3: Methods of Empirical Research

(Friday, 9 AM – 12:30 PM)

In this session we begin to analyze the various empirical methods that have been used in this literature, and discuss the empirical approaches being proposed by the students. We will also introduce a variety of data sources that should be of use to a large number of students.

In particular, we will listen to a presentation from Pablo Beramendi, who will discuss the empirical applications of the Luxembourg Income Study and other data resources related to income distribution.

Students should be prepared to provide brief explanations of their empirical strategy, the data resources they have already discovered, and the resources they hope to obtain in the field.

Session 4: Inter-regional and inter-personal transfers

(Friday, 1:30 PM – 5 PM)

How do politicians make decisions about redistributing resources and sharing risks across individuals, social groups, and regions, and with what consequences? How do various configurations of preferences, demographics, and institutions shape choices about redistribution?

Each student will give a 15-minute presentation, followed by 30 minutes of discussion.

1:30 PM – 2:15 PM:	Heather Bergman
2:15 PM – 3:00 PM:	Yumiko Shimabukuro
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM:	Break
3:15 PM – 4:00 PM:	Sade Owolabi
4:00 PM – 4:45 PM:	Miguel De Figueiredo

Session 5: Incentives for redistribution in developing countries

(Saturday, 9 AM – 12:30 PM)

What explains variation in individual preferences for redistribution, and how do these translate into differences across countries and over time in the extent and structure of redistributive programs in developing countries?

9:00 AM – 9:45 AM:	Guy Grossman
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9:45 AM – 10:30 AM: Michael Ewers
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM: Break
10:45 AM – 11:30 AM: Luis Camacho-Solis
11:30 AM – 12:15 PM: Tai-Wei Derek Liu

Session 6: Social groups, bureaucratic agencies, and decision-making
(Saturday, 1:30 PM – 5 PM)

How do the incentive structures and standard operating procedures within bureaucratic and other organizations shape policies with implications for redistribution and long-run inequality?

1:30 PM – 2:15 PM: Christopher Marcum
2:15 PM – 3:00 PM: Tod Van Gunten
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM: Break
3:15 PM – 4:00 PM: Rachel Meltzer
4:00 PM – 4:45 PM: Rebecca Tippett

Session 7: Looking Forward
(Sunday, 9 AM – 11 AM)

What have we learned about the field?

What will happen over the summer?

Review of the elements of a good dissertation proposal.

What are some common pitfalls to avoid?

Preparations for the fall workshop

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
FALL 2007 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

Political Economy of Redistribution

Research Directors:

Jonathan Rodden, jrodden@mit.edu
Erik Wibbels, ewibbels@u.washington.edu

ROOM 305

Crowne Plaza St. Louis Downtown, Saint Louis, MO

Thursday, September 6 – Sunday, September 9

This is the second of two workshops designed to help students prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals in their chosen field. The first workshop aimed to map the research field with respect to contributing disciplines, methods, sources, and area knowledge, and to help prepare fellows for their pre-dissertation summer research. The goal of this second workshop is to focus on the mechanics and methods of writing a dissertation proposal. Toward that end, we have two specific goals: first, discussing the practical challenges of conducting dissertation research, ranging from field work to survey design to simply surviving the dissertation-writing process; second, building excellent, fundable proposals through a sustained and structured discussion of each proposal. Though this workshop is largely focused on the details of the students' individual projects, we will continue to develop the ways in which the projects contribute to the broader research field of the political economy of redistribution.

Our first goal will be addressed both in a general way and more specifically as we work through individual proposals. We will deal with some of the common research challenges, including data collection, field research, and the difficulty of sustaining momentum through the entire dissertation writing process in a general session. As we move into the discussion of proposals, we will address the challenges of research design and implementation specific to each proposal. The discussion of each proposal will follow a common format. Each student will present their proposal in 20 minutes. Each presentation will be assigned a student discussant who is responsible for addressing a series of specific issues over the course of 5 minutes. Thereafter, we will have 35 minutes of discussion with the entire group about the proposal. Each presenter will be assigned a note taker who will present a summary of the issues raised during these sessions. Ultimately, this detailed discussion of each proposal is aimed at helping students produce better proposals and dissertations.

Workshop Readings and Resources

You should reread the SSRC documents on writing proposals before our meeting, and critically examine your own proposals in light of those guidelines.

Workshop Assignments

1. Rewrite the original two page proposal in light of the comments received at the Denver workshop. **Due Friday, June 1.**
2. A short, two page field report sketching out what students learned and how what they learned impacts the conceptualization of their project. **Due one week after return from the field.** This document should answer the following questions:
 - a. What did you learn in the field?
 - b. What were the most significant challenges you foresee in future field work?
 - c. How did your research experience change your understanding of your project?
 - d. How can you integrate your field research experience into your dissertation proposal?
3. A 6-8 page dissertation proposal due **10 days in advance of the St. Louis workshop.** These proposals should begin to look like full-fledged funding proposals. To that end, each proposal should have several common elements, including:
 - a. A clear and compelling statement of the research question that articulates why it is interesting.
 - b. A literature review that places the project in the broader context of existing research in relevant fields. We encourage students to think broadly across disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries when thinking about their projects.
 - c. A discussion of the hypotheses that will be examined in the research. This is the portion of the proposal in which students will forward their argument.
 - d. A clear research design that lays out the methods through which the student plans to empirically assess the hypotheses.
4. Prepare a 20 minute presentation of your proposal using PowerPoint. We recommend that each presentation explicitly address the four main sections of a proposal as outlined above.
5. Read all the proposals of your fellow students in advance of the workshop. As you read, please keep each of the individual elements of a proposal in mind. Discussants should prepare five minutes of discussion using PowerPoint that directly addresses each element of the proposal. As you read your fellow students' proposals, you should be thinking:
 - a. Has the researcher motivated the project in a compelling way? Is there a better way to frame the research question?
 - b. Has the researcher identified all of the relevant literature? Are there unusual or unexpected links that might be drawn with other literatures? Are the theoretical connections among the relevant literatures clear?
 - c. Has the author made their argument clearly? Is the argument coherent?
 - d. Is the research design feasible? Are there alternative or additional research strategies that would complement the proposed design?

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL, Wednesday, September 5: Registration packets will be distributed at check in.

Session 1: Panel – The Dissertation Proposal: Strategies and Funding Sources

(Thursday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM)

- Welcome and Introductions (DPDF Program Director Peter Sahlins)
- Dissertation Funder Presentations

Dr. Leslie C. Aiello, President, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research
Mr. William Hahn, Program Director, Division of Graduate Education National Science Foundation (NSF)
Mr. Walter Jackson, National Program Manager, Fulbright IIE
Dr. Nicole Stahlmann, Associate Director, SSRC International Dissertation Research Fellowships (IDRF)

Session 2: General thematic session

(Thursday, 2:00 PM – 5 PM)

- We will start with very brief, cocktail party statements of projects that include a description of your experience in the field and its impact on the projects. The chief goal is to encourage students to describe their projects in a very clear and concise way. The description of the field experience will serve as an introduction to the following discussion of dissertation research strategies.
- We will discuss some of the most common practical challenges of collecting data (in the field and otherwise) for approximately 1.5 hours. Likely topics include pointers for conducting successful field research, how to design field and phone surveys, and other data collection challenges. It is possible we will have an outside speaker for this session.
- The final portion of this session will focus on the challenges of finishing the dissertation. Likely topics will include how to sustain ones focus during the dissertation writing process, the challenge of integrating qualitative and quantitative evidence convincingly, how to deal with the inevitable evolution of dissertations as they move from proposals to final products, and how to negotiate differences with advisors.

9 PM: *Optional for all: Visual Culture movie screening, “Meet Me in St. Louis” (1944), directed by Vincente Minnelli, starring Judy Garland.*

Session 3: Student presentations, discussants and proposal discussion.

(Friday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM)

These will include 20 minute presentations, followed by 5 minutes of formal discussion by the discussant and then 35 minutes of general discussion.

- Rachel Meltzer (Becky Tippet, discussant)
- Miguel de Figuerido (Chris Marcum, discussant)
- Becky Tippet (Rachel Meltzer, discussant)

Session 4: Student presentations, discussants and proposal discussion.

(Friday, 2:00 PM – 5 PM)

- Chris Marcum (Miguel de Figuerido, discussant)
- Tod van Gunten (Heather Bergman, discussant)
- Luis Camacho-Solis (Yuki Shimabukuro, discussant)

Session 5: Student presentations, discussants and proposal discussion.

(Saturday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM)

- Heather Bergman (Tod van Gunten, discussant)
- Yuki Shimabukuro (Luis Camacho-Solis, discussant)
- Michael Ewers (Guy Grossman, discussant)

Session 6: Student presentations, discussants and proposal discussion.

(Saturday, 2:00 PM – 5 PM)

- Sade Owolabi (Derek Liu, discussant)
- Guy Grossman (Michael Ewers, discussant)
- Derek Liu (Sade Owolabi)

Session 7: Plenary Session – Student Mini-Conference: Mapping Research Fields

(Sunday, 9 AM – 12:30 PM)

The last session of the second DPDF workshop is devoted to student presentations of their research field. Students in each field are responsible for organizing their group presentations in the mode of a mini-conference. Each field will be given a total of 25 minutes, and projects should be presented in an order and grouping that gives the field coherence. Students are invited to use images and other media as appropriate, but should structure their very short presentations around the following: 1) a research question; 2) a working hypothesis; 3) the research site(s) and sources; 4) the methodological approach; and 5) contributions to the field. These interventions, in short, represent the “cocktail party” version of the answer to the question, “what are you working on?” The exercise is intended to give fellows the opportunity to develop a summary version of their research project while locating their work in a collectively-defined research field.