Summary:
This class will give students from economics an introduction to how questions of central relevance to economists are approached and discussed in other social and behavioral sciences, particularly evolutionary biology, anthropology and political science. The course will consist of an introduction to the history of how economics as a science evolved, especially with respect to other social sciences in the domain of social dynamics. The course will proceed with an evaluation of social group formation, the human family and human « hypersociality », and lastly, origins and consequences of political institutions. As such, the course is designed to provide an overview of social dynamics at multiple scales and levels of complexity.

Teaching team:
The course will be taught by an interdisciplinary team of teachers who are able to provide students with exposure to different methods and topics in the field.
Paul Seabright (TSE/IAST), economist
Jorge Peña (IAST), evolutionary biologist
Jonathan Stieglitz (IAST), anthropologist
Michael Becher (IAST), political scientist

Requirements:
The course will be taught in English. Students are expected to actively participate in class and to prepare by reading the assigned texts.

Evaluations:
Students will be evaluated on one term paper (e.g. the outline for a research project) and one take-home exam (including three questions, one for each part of the course). The term paper grade will represent 40% of the final course grade, and the take-home exam 60%.

Outline:

week 1-2: PART I, Paul Seabright:
- History of economics in relation to the other social sciences: up to the 18th century
- The emergence of economics as a distinct form of social analysis in the 19th and 20th centuries
- The breakdown of the frontiers between economics and other social sciences in the 21st century

week 3 – 5: PART II, Jorge Peña: Evolution of social groups and the human family
- Introduction to evolutionary theory (natural selection, mutation, fitness, evolutionary game theory)
- Evolutionary origins of societies (group formation, group transformation, evolution of eusociality, cooperative breeding, kin selection, evolutionary conflict and conflict resolution)
- Evolution of the human family (mating patterns, parental investment, intra-household sharing, Hamilton’s rule)

week 6 – 8: PART III, Jonathan Stieglitz: Human uniqueness in comparative perspective
- Life history theory (variation between and within species in profiles of fertility and mortality; reproductive value; life history trade-offs; evolution of post-reproductive lifespan)
- Economic decision-making (patch and prey choice models; marginal value theorem)
- Pair-bond formation and stability (sexual division of labor and complementarity, sexual conflict, mate desertion)

week 9 – 10: PART IV, Michael Becher: (Economic) Origins and consequences of political institutions

- Introduction to analysis of political institutions and political development
- Democracy, redistribution and development
- Origins and stability of democratic and autocratic institutions
- Endogenous electoral systems and their effects
Reading list:

PART I:
(these are intended for reading subsequent to the class by those interested: summaries of the essential points will be given in class).

- History of economics in relation to the other social sciences: up to the 18th century
  Herodotus: *Histories*
  Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqadimah*
  Bernard Mandeville: *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vice, Publick Benefits*
  Adam Smith: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*
  Adam Smith: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*

- The emergence of economics as a distinct form of social analysis in the 19th and 20th centuries
  Robert Heilbroner: *The Worldly Philosophers*

- The breakdown of the frontiers between economics and other social sciences in the 21st century
  Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson: *Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*
  Samuel Bowles & Herb Gintis: *A Cooperative Species*
  Diane Coyle: *The Soulful Science*
  Sanjit Dhami: *The Foundations of Behavioral Economic Analysis*
  Jared Diamond: *Guns, Germs and Steel*
  Joseph Henrich: *The Secret of our Success: How Culture is Driving Human Evolution, Domesticating our Species and Making us Smarter*
  Paul Seabright: *The Company of Strangers: A Natural History of Economic Life*
  Rafael Wittek, Tom Snijders & Victor Nee: *The Handbook of Rational Choice Social Research.*
PART II: EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL GROUPS AND THE HUMAN FAMILY

- Introduction to evolutionary theory (natural selection, mutation, fitness, evolutionary game theory)


- Evolutionary origins of societies (group formation, group transformation, major transitions in individuality, cooperative breeding, kin selection, evolutionary conflict and conflict resolution)


- Evolution of the human family (mating patterns, parental investment, intra-household sharing, Hamilton's rule)


**PART III: HUMAN UNIQUENESS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

- Life history theory


- Economic decision-making


- Pair-bond formation and stability


PART IV: (ECONOMIC) ORIGINS AND CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

- Introduction to analysis of political institutions and political development


- Democracy, redistribution and development


Origins and stability of democratic and autocratic institutions


- Endogenous electoral systems and their effects


