

# Special Topics



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KAP 150

Monday 2pm - 4:50pm

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Discourses of development seem to be all around us, saturating many of our shared commonsense conceptions of time, history, identity and change. Yet, while ideas of development are fairly ubiquitous, inflecting both large-scale political discussions as well as mundane understandings of what seems to be just or necessary, they are rarely ever defined. And as development as a dominant framework to think society trembles amidst the rise of the various crisis sprouting all around the world, we are called to scrutinize it as a distinctive cultural and political phenomenon. This course introduces students to the political history of the idea of development. We begin the course by tracing the prehistory of development in the pre-WW2 era of imperial and colonial rule. We then examine the foundations of modern development discourses, dwelling on how commonsensical notions like the national economy, GDP, modern expertise and economic growth came to be established and accepted as dominant political and cultural frameworks. We then move onto the end of the 20th century to meditate on how the so-called "end of history" following the fall of the Berlin Wall came to ironically fuel a wide variety of critical takes on the foundations of modern development. Finally, we survey some of the complex challenges faced by the practice of development today, from contemporary debates on supply chain resilience, to the crisis of international humanitarianism, to the management of global pandemics, to the urge to decarbonize the economy