

LEOPOLDO FERGUSSON
leopoldo@mit.edu

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

MIT Department of Economics
50 Memorial Drive, E52-391
Cambridge, MA 02142-1347
leopoldo@mit.edu
<http://econ-www.mit.edu/grad/leopoldo>

HOME CONTACT INFORMATION

38 Lee Street Apt 1R
Cambridge, MA 02139-1810
Mobile: 617-372-4672

MIT PLACEMENT OFFICER

Professor Nancy L. Rose nrose@mit.edu
617-253-8956

MIT PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Peter Hoagland pvhoag@mit.edu
617-253-8787

**DOCTORAL
STUDIES**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
PhD, Economics, Expected completion June 2011
DISSERTATION: "Essays on the Political Economy of Development"

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES

Professor Daron Acemoglu
MIT Department of Economics
50 Memorial Drive, E52-380B
Cambridge, MA 02142-1347
617-253-4669
daron@mit.edu

Professor Abhijit Banerjee
MIT Department of Economics
50 Memorial Drive, E52-252D
Cambridge, MA 02142-1347
617-324-1760
banerjee@mit.edu

Professor James Snyder
MIT Department of Economics and
Department of Political Science
50 Memorial Drive, , E53-457
Cambridge, MA 02142-1347
617-253-2669
millett@mit.edu

Professor James A. Robinson
Harvard Department of Government
1737 Cambridge Street, Office K309
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-496-2839
jrobinson@gov.harvard.edu

**PRIOR
EDUCATION**

M.A., honors	Economics	Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia	2003
B.A., magna cum laude	Economics	Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia	2002

CITIZENSHIP

Colombian

GENDER: M

DATE OF BIRTH

May 7, 1979

LANGUAGES

English, Spanish

**RESEARCH &
TEACHING
FIELDS**

Primary Fields: Political Economy, Development Economics
Secondary Fields: Economic History

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	AS TEACHING ASSISTANT AT MIT		
	Microeconomics (undergraduate, MIT course 14.01)	Spring 2010	
	Game Theory & Political Theory (graduate, MIT course 17.810/17.811), Professor Jim Snyder	Fall 2009	
	Applied Economics for Managers (Sloan Fellows Program, MIT course 15.024), Professor Thomas Stoker	Summer 2008	
	Microeconomic Theory and Public Policy (undergraduate, MIT course 14.03), Professor Panle Jia and Professor Stephen Ryan	Spring 2008 Spring 2009	
	AS LECTURER AT UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES		
	Political Economy of Economic Policy, with Pablo Querubín	2003-2005	
	Macroeconomics I	2004-2005	
	Macroeconomics II	Summer 2006	
	Macroeconomics III , with Gustavo Suárez in Summer 2007	2004-2005	
Macroeconomics for Non-economists (With Andrés Escobar)	Summer 2004, 2005 & 2007 Summer 2004		
RELEVANT POSITIONS	AS TEACHING ASSISTANT AT UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES		
	Wealth and Poverty, Macroeconomics III, Mathematical Economics, Monetary Theory and Policy, Macroeconomics for Non-economists	2001-2003	
	Professor-Instructor, Faculty of Economics and Center for Studies in Economic Development (CEDE), Universidad de los Andes	2002-2005	
	Junior Researcher and Analyst, Department of Economic Studies and Inflation Section, Central Bank of Colombia	2001-2002	
	FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS	<i>Lauchlin Currie</i> Scholarship for best applicant for the Central Bank of Colombia Scholarships on doctoral studies	2005
		<i>Juan Luis Londoño</i> Prize for best thesis for the Master of Economics, Universidad de los Andes	2003
		<i>Ramón de Zubiría</i> Scholarship, for best cumulative grade point average in the Faculty of Economics, Universidad de los Andes	2000 and 2001
		<i>Excelencia Académica</i> Scholarship, for best grade point average in the Faculty of Economics, Universidad de los Andes	1999
	PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	Organizer of the Political Economics Group Student Conference, Cambridge, Massachussets, NBER, 2007 and 2008. With Marcello Miccoli and Pablo Querubin.	
		Undergraduate Thesis Advisor, "The Impact of State Presence on FARC Attacks" by María A. Palacio, Faculty of Economics, Universidad de los Andes, Special Mention for the <i>Ulpiano Ayala Prize</i> to the best undergraduate thesis in 2004	

Technical Committee, Ensayos Sobre Política Económica, Journal of the Central Bank of Colombia

Revision of the Spanish translations of: Robert E. Lucas, *Lectures on Economic Growth*; Rudiger Dornbusch, *Keys to Prosperity: Free Markets, Sound Money, and a Bit of Luck*; and Paul Krugman, *The Great Unraveling*. Published in Bogotá, Colombia, Grupo Editorial Norma, 2004 and 2005. With Juan Carlos Echeverry and Pablo Querubín.

PARTICIPATION IN SEMINARS

LACEA Annual Meetings, 2009, 2007, 2004 and 2003
ECLAC, XVII Regional Seminar on Fiscal Policy, 2005
NBER Inter-American Seminar on Economics, 2003

PUBLICATIONS BOOKS

Política Fiscal: Un Enfoque de Tributación Óptima, (Fiscal Policy: An Optimal Taxation Approach) with Gustavo Suárez, Bogotá, Ediciones Uniandes, March 2010

PARTICIPATION IN BOOKS

¿Quién Manda Sobre las Cuentas Públicas? (Who Decides on Public Expenditures?) by Juan Carlos Echeverry with Jorge Alexander Bonilla, Andrés Clavijo, Andrés Moya, Verónica Navas and Pablo Querubín, Ediciones Uniandes, Bogotá, 2009.

PAPERS

“Institutions for Financial Development: What are They and Where do They Come From?” Journal of Economic Surveys, 2006, 20 (1): 27-70

“Impuestos, Crecimiento Económico y Bienestar en Colombia (1970-1999)” (Taxation, Welfare and Growth in Colombia (1970-1999)), Desarrollo y Sociedad, 2004, 52: 145-204

“‘Dollar’ Debt in Colombian Firms: Are Sinners Punished During Devaluations?”, with Juan Carlos Echeverry, Roberto Steiner and Camila Aguilar, Emerging Markets Review, 2003, 4(4): 417-449

RESEARCH PAPERS

“The Political Economy of Rural Property Rights”

Theory and evidence suggest that improving agricultural productivity in developing countries is essential to reduce the income gap between the rich and poor, and that property rights in land are a major determinant of such productivity. If property rights in land are so good, why are they not adopted more widely? I propose a theory based on the idea that limited property rights over peasants' plots are optimal from the point of view of elite landowners, who depend on peasants for labour, because they achieve two goals. First, like other distortions such as taxation, they reduce peasants' income from their own plots and this generates a cheap labour force for landowners. Second, and unlike taxation, they force peasants to remain in the rural

sector to protect their property, even if job opportunities appear in the urban sector. The theory implies that with low urban wages and no effective threat of peasant migration, good property rights prevail. In contrast, with an effective threat of migration, minimal taxation and bad property rights to avoid migration of the labour force arises as long as peasants own little land. If peasants own sufficient land, however, property rights for peasants are optimal since the elite again focuses on taxation. The theory implies that while at low levels of modernization bad property rights arise only if landowners have limited ability to tax peasants, bad rural property rights may easily persist at high levels of modernization. The model also predicts a non-monotonic relationship between the quality of rural property rights and land in the hands of peasants. It thus provides a specific mechanism for the endogenous persistence of bad institutions highlighted in important development and history literatures, and also suggests a general reason why small land reforms may deliver poor results.

“He Who Counts Elects: Determinants of Fraud in the 1922 Colombian Presidential Election,” with Isaías N. Chaves and James A. Robinson, NBER Working Paper No. 15127, July 2009.

In this paper, we construct measures of the extent of ballot stuffing (fraudulent votes) and electoral coercion at the municipal level using data from Colombia's 1922 Presidential elections. Our main findings are that the presence of the state reduced the extent of ballot stuffing, but that of the clergy, which was closely imbricated in partisan politics, increased coercion. We also show that landed elites to some extent substituted for the absence of the state and managed to reduce the extent of fraud where they were strong. At the same time, in places which were completely out of the sphere of the state, and thus partisan politics, both ballot stuffing and coercion were relatively low. Thus the relationship between state presence and fraud is not monotonic.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

“Population and Social Conflict,” with Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson.

What are the determinants of violent conflict? In this paper, we examine empirically the effect of a relatively overlooked factor: population growth. Exploiting the international epidemiological transition that began in the 1940s, we construct an instrument for changes in population (Acemoglu and Johnson, 2007) and find that countries with higher (exogenous) increases in population experimented higher increases in social conflict. A simple falsification test indicates that changes in conflict from 1900 to 1940 are uncorrelated with our instrument, lending support to our identification strategy. Our results are robust to using a variety of standard measures for conflict and are not driven by differential trends between countries with different baseline characteristics often emphasized in the literature on civil wars. Moreover, since most measures of conflict are based on counts on number of casualties, we perform a number of simple exercises to rule out the possibility that our results are driven from a mechanical increase in the number of detected civil wars in countries with rapidly growing populations. Using a simple theoretical framework, we interpret these findings as an indication that a larger population, without a corresponding increase in resources and technology, generates greater competition for resources and makes conflict and civil wars more likely in environments where the institutions cannot handle the higher level of disputes.

**“Varieties of Economic Inequality and Violent Conflict:
A Hypothesis for Colombia,”** with Juan Fernando Vargas.

Economic inequality is often considered a prime cause of violent conflict. However, empirical research and theoretical arguments inform us that there is no reason to expect an unambiguous impact of wealth inequality on conflict. Motivated by the Colombian experience, in this paper we use a simple theoretical framework to examine the way in which two different dimensions of inequality influence violent conflict. The first dimension is the "rich-poor divide," or the overall level of inequality between a large minority of relatively poor and homogenous individuals, and a small elite of wealthier individuals. The second dimension of inequality is the dispersion within the wealthy individuals in society. Using cadastral records, we provide *prima facie* evidence in favor of a "grievance regime" in which more inequality in the form of a deeper rich-poor divide increases the likelihood of conflict. However, wealth inequality within the relatively rich is correlated with less conflict. We interpret this last result as an indication that state capacity is low and the extent of property rights protection thus depends upon the capacity of groups in society to either organize effectively their own protection or lobby the state for protection. In this context, this negative correlation is consistent with an Olsonian view of collective action for the rich: greater concentration of wealth improves collective effort and deters the poor from initiating conflict.