

PPE Seminar Series



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Before apartheid: labor markets, political parties and institutions in 19th century South Africa

Abstract: I examine the effect of an inter-sectoral economic shock, the discovery of diamonds, on agricultural producers' political demand for coercive labor laws in South Africa. I show that farmers in wheat growing areas were more likely to petition the government for amendments to labor laws (i.e., better enforcement) when their demand for labor increased to provide food to growing and commercializing towns after the second diamond rush in 1871. I argue that the development of the ethno-nationalist political party, the Afrikaner Bond, helped farmers organize to lobby the government. Petitions are increasingly submitted in Dutch during the 1880s and wheat areas elected more Bond members in the 1898 general election. Last, I show wheat areas were more likely to get additional “enforcing institutions” (courts) with the growth in government revenues after 1871.

The Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) Research Seminar Series provides a forum for eminent scholars across these disciplines to present their work in a flexible format with faculty and students.

Fri. Sept. 24th | 4:00–5:30 p.m. | Via Zoom | Register in advance here

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