Institutional economics proceeds from the premise that many distinctive aspects of an economy stem from the nature of its institutions, conventionally defined as the humanly constructed rules that structure economic (and political) interactions. The origin and formation of institutions is an essential element of economic history and economic development. The properties and the effects of institutions can only be understood by applying systematic analysis. Such analysis requires theory and empirics, complemented by knowledge of the particularities of the pertinent institutions and their setting.

The comparative element recognizes the fact that institutions are often available only in discrete alternatives, which frequently differ considerably. Therefore, the standard mode of analysis is comparison between quite distinct institutional alternatives. Moreover, an essential characteristic of many institutions is that they apply to a whole society or a distinctive sub-part, such as a sector or a cultural group. Thus, there is lessened scope for observational variation if study is confined to one country or one type of economic system. Cross-country comparisons are an essential element of institutional economics.

The following reading list includes many more topics than can be covered in a one-semester introductory course. It also has more items within topics than students are expected to read when the topics are taught. The reading list is intended to be more than a reading list for a class; it offers a guide to students who want to study a specific area more deeply than can be accomplished in class. Which readings are most pertinent for the course will be clarified as the semester proceeds.

Availability of copies of the readings: Most of the readings for this course are available on the internet and a copy will be easily found using Google. In the few cases where it is not obvious how to access a reading, I have provided some indication of where to look. For accessing many published readings in journals, it is necessary either to use a computer that connects to the internet using a University of Maryland IP address or to use the library's Research Port (http://researchport.umd.edu/). I can make available copies of readings not available on the internet, either by lending a physical copy or by emailing.

***This reading list is always a work in progress. A small number of readings will be subtracted and added during the course of the semester.***
I. Introduction


Gintis, Herbert "Solving the Puzzle of Prosociality" *Rationality and Society* 2003 15: 155


II. Three Fundamental Institutions: Property, Decentralization, and Contract

II.1 Property

II.1.A General


Dean Lueck And Thomas J. Miceli "Property Rights And Property Law" In Polinsky & Shavell eds., *Handbook of Law and Economics*. Available online at ssrn.com


II.1.B. Analysis of Property Rights in Standard Environments


II.1.C. *The Effects of Ownership on the Institutional Environment*

See section III.4.

II.1.D. *Effects of Non-standard Ownership Forms*


II.2 *Decentralization*


II.3 Transactions, Relationships, and Contract

II.3.A The Transactional Problem: Theory and Predictions


II.3.B Solutions to the Transactional Problem: Formal and Informal


II.3.C Empirical Studies on Transactions


III. Institutional Change and Institutional Choice: Origins and Causes

III.1. Culture, Custom, and Convention


http://www.milgrom.net/articlesmain.htm


III.2 The 'Accidents' of History


Joana Naritomi, Rodrigo Soares, and Juliano J. Assunção. "Rent Seeking and the Unveiling of ‘De Facto’ Institutions: Development and Colonial Heritage within Brazil"


III.3 Persistence


III.4 Wealth: resources, productivity, and institutions accumulated from the past


III.5 Politics and Political Economy


III.6 Choosing, designing institutions


IV. The Effects of Institutions

IV.1 Cross-country studies: macroeconomics of institutional development and growth


IV.2 Miscellaneous micro-economic studies


…..many could be added
V. Case studies

V.1 Transition: destroying the old and constructing the new


V.2 Culture in Italy


V.3 England's Early Development


V.4 Legal Origins


V.5 China: Incremental Reform Using Second-Best Institutions


VI. Measuring Institutions


