

The Political Economy of the Pandemic: National and Global Responses

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The COVID-19 pandemic that erupted in China's Wuhan city at the end of 2019 plunged the world into a global crisis comparable to that of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Scientific breakthroughs in the area of vaccines and anti-viral cures starting in 2021 have reduced the death toll significantly, especially in high-income countries. However, the dissemination of vaccines to the global south has been slow. New variants may overwhelm the ability of existing vaccines to contain the disease.

Given the substantial variation in state responses, it is imperative for students of international relations and public policy to investigate and comparatively analyze the strategies and policies of states, corporations, and national and transnational scientific communities. To this aim, the participants *in this panel will address the following questions:

1. What are the key factors that account for the variety of national responses to the pandemic?
2. What has been the relationship between scientific communities and power? To what extent has scientific knowledge been subordinated to the logic of power in general and economic power in particular?
3. In what ways do national and international responses to the pandemic reflect the neoliberal order in general, and the neo-liberal organization of public health in particular?
4. Is the return of the state here to stay, and is this a good or a bad thing? Will the political management of the crisis lead to more authoritarian forms of neo-liberalism, or will state intervention in the public sphere serve to revitalize social democratic ideas and policies?
5. Is the tension between fighting the pandemic and democracy substantive and real, or are appeals to democracy and liberty largely excuses designed to justify limits on state intervention? Where does privacy fit in this context, if at all?

Track Classification: Global Health Working Group