POL 830: Comparative Politics
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This course is a field seminar in comparative politics, providing a broad coverage of the central themes and fundamental issues in the field. It will sacrifice depth for breadth, but students should develop a basic understanding of the major contours of the subfield, including different methodological approaches as well as the main subjects of inquiry. More importantly, a central goal is to develop the tools and skills necessary for evaluating work in the field and conducting one’s own research. For doctoral students, this course should also prepare them well for the comparative politics subfield comprehensive exam.

This class is a discussion seminar. It is, thus, essential that students be prepared to discuss all of the required readings each and every class. Many of the works we will read are a blend of theory, methods, and substantive empirical analysis, which are aimed at uncovering systematic patterns or solving puzzles. Class participants should thus be prepared to describe and compare the week’s required readings from two points of view:

1) What are the principal substantive arguments being made? What phenomena are the targets of explanation? Are they clearly identified and defined? Are they defined at the level of individuals, groups, institutions, states, or whatever? What variables are proposed to explain them? At what level are these variables? What causal mechanisms are proposed as linkages?

2) What methodological approach is taken to enhance the credibility of those arguments and how well does it succeed? What kinds of empirical implications of the theory are examined? How are the important variables measure—quantitative/qualitative approaches? What care is taken to specify relationships between multiple variables? How are cases selected?

Grade Breakdown:

1) Critical reflection papers (app. 2-3 pages each): 30%
2) Discussion questions (2-3 Questions): 15%
3) Research Paper: 55%

• Note: You need to do 5 total critical reflection papers over the semester. On the weeks you do not do reflection papers, you need to submit discussion questions (the day before class).

Plagiarism Policy:

• Be sure to familiarize yourself with the department and university policy on plagiarism and cheating. It will be fully enforced in this course. It can be found on the department website.
Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 (September 3): Introduction – Historical Development and Overview of the Field
Readings:
- Special issue of Comparative Political Studies vol. 40(1). 2007. Particularly, Munck and Snyder (5-31), Mahoney (32-38), Wibbels (39-44), and Munck and Snyder (45-47).

Week 2 (September 10): The Logic of Comparative Inquiry and The Small-N Problem
Readings:

Recommended:

Week 3 (September 17): Qualitative vs. Quantitative Debate; Research Design and Pitfalls
Readings:
Recommended:

General:

Conceptual “Stretching” and Measurement Problems

Selection Bias:

Inference and Hypothesis Testing:

**Week 4 (September 24): State Formation, Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict**

Readings:

Recommended:

**Week 5 (October 1): Political Development**

Readings:

Recommended:


Skocpol, Theda, 1979. *States and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press).


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**Week 6 (October 8): Political Culture, Social Capital, and Democracy**

Readings:


Recommended:

Week 7 (October 15): Democratic Institutions
Readings:

Recommended:

Week 8 (October 22): Electoral Systems and Party Competition
Readings:

Recommended:
Week 9 (October 29): Parties, Strategies and Party Systems

Readings:


Recommended:

Week 10 (November 5): To be determined (Class will be run by Professor Hans-Dieter Klingemann)
Readings: TBA

Week 11 (November 12): Comparative Political Behaviour
Readings:

Recommended:
- Franklin, Mark, et al.

Week 12 (November 19): Comparative Public Opinion and Values


Recommended:


Week 13 (November 26): Student Presentations