

POLI 7970: Proseminar in Comparative Government

Spring 2016
Room: Stubbs 210
M 1:30 - 4:20

Dr. Joshua D. Potter
Office: Stubbs 232
Email: jdp97711@gmail.com

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the major theoretical strains within the sub field of comparative politics, with special attention placed on the practical mechanics of developing research ideas in light of recent literature. This course should be of interest to students working in the comparative sub field or any student planning on producing research on institutions, social movements, democratic representation, regime transitions, or social diversity. The selection of readings attempts to strike a balance between older, canonical works and newer, cutting-edge research. Although the main theoretical and empirical thrust of the class will tend toward cross-national empirical work, substantial portions of the syllabus also pertain to a diversity of methodological approaches, including process tracing narratives, focused qualitative comparisons, field and lab experiments, survey designs, and formal theoretical work.

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of this course are developing facility with (a) the theoretical content of the sub field of comparative politics and (b) the practical mechanics of tracing the development of knowledge within this field; as well as familiarizing the student with (c) several of the sub field's major data repositories and (d) the process of applying theoretical constructs to specific empirical examples; and, finally, (e) drafting mock grant applications to fund future fieldwork efforts. See the following sections for specific discussions of how these processes will play out during the semester. There are no exams in the course and the final grade is comprised of class participation and a multitude of shorter writing assignments.

Course Policies

Academic integrity is of paramount importance and evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade on the assignment in question. Except for the most extenuating of circumstances, I do not accept late work and I expect each student to come to each of our course meetings having completed the readings and assignments for that day. Laptops and tablets are acceptable for the purposes of referring to the course readings and electronic notes during discussion. Cell phone usage is unacceptable. Checking email and sending text messages are also unacceptable.

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
94-100	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D
90-93	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-
87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	< 60	F

Requirements and Evaluation

Participation 25 points

For each week in the schedule below, students are expected to have read and reflected upon the manuscripts listed for that day. In addition, students should be prepared to participate in discussion, both in response to comments from their peers as well as to direct questions from me. From time to time, we will run in-class simulations and small group discussions. Students should be good sports and helpful colleagues.

Literature Tracing Exercise 5 points each, 20 points total

For weeks 2, 3, 4, and 5, students are required to submit a literature tracing exercise where they select one reading from our syllabus (it could be from any week on the syllabus) and write a 2-3 page, double-spaced summary of how that reading has been utilized in subsequent literature. Specifically, using [Google Scholar](#) or the [Social Science Citation Index](#), the student should identify at least 3 peer-reviewed articles that cite the selected reading in some way (perhaps as a building block of a broader theoretical discussion, as a precedent for a particular type of data measurement strategy, and so on). Describe how each of these 3 articles utilizes the selected reading from the syllabus. The point is to learn how to use a manuscript not just understand its content.

Data Reports 5 points each, 15 points total

For weeks 6, 7, and 8, each student is required to submit a data report of 3-4 double-spaced pages in length that describes one of the following data sets in the field of comparative politics.

Survey Data Sets: The [World Values Survey](#), [Latin American Public Opinion Project \(LAPOP\)](#), the [Arab Barometer](#), and the [Comparative Study of Electoral Systems](#)

Institutional Data Sets: The World Bank's [Database of Political Institutions](#), Matt Golder's [Democratic Electoral Systems Around the World](#), the [Quality of Government \(QOG\)](#) Institute, the [Comparative Constitutions Project](#), and the [Autocratic Regimes Data](#)

Parties and Elections Data Sets: Dawn Brancati's [Global Elections Database](#), Yale's [National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy \(NELDA\)](#), the [Comparative Manifesto Project](#), and the [Party Government Data Set \(PGDS\)](#)

Social and Conflict Data Sets: the [Cross-Cutting Cleavages Data Set](#), the [Minorities at Risk \(MAR\)](#) Project, the [Human Rights Data \(CIRI\)](#) Project, and the

Focused Comparison Exercise 20 points

For the week 10 meeting, each student is to select two countries within her region of interest for a focused comparison exercise. This is a more substantial piece of written work than the previous assignments and should clock in around 8-10 double-spaced pages. Approach this assignment with an eye toward familiarizing yourself with both countries in deep terms that is, you will learn something about their institutional, historical, social, and political differences and similarities. In particular, I want you to address the following prompt: select 4 major theories or hypotheses

Biases, Survival Strategies, and Motivations

There are many different ways to teach a proseminar in comparative politics; it is an exceedingly diverse subfield of the discipline, with all manner of substantive topics, approaches, and biases. I am coming at this material from the perspective of a newly-minted Ph.D. who was largely trained to think about research questions as a cross-national institutionalist and my own work focuses heavily on large-N statistical analysis. However, I have great respect for methodological pluralism and I tried to strike a balance in our reading load between older (canonical, but not necessarily most correct) and newer (cutting-edge, but not necessarily time tested) works. All this by way of saying that, while I'm coming to this material with my own biases, I have worked hard to try to present you with a representative sampling of what the subfield has to offer.

You also have your own biases, whether you're aware of them at this point or not. To a large extent, your experience with the material is mediated by your academic background, your interests, and your ability to roll up your sleeves and put in a good day's work. For this reason, you will find that you and your peers will understand concepts at different rates, develop certain facilities with greater intensities, and harbor divergent preferences over which questions and manuscripts are interesting, effective, and successful. This can be a complicated landscape to navigate and, if you're not careful, you'll incur psychological costs that might stand in your way of being productive and contributing to class. Here are some general principles to keep in mind:

You will not quickly get most things. It is important to differentiate (1) those things that you do not know *now, at this moment* but which you might know *in 15 or 20 minutes*, from (2) those things which are *perfectly unknowable regardless of time*. You will read hard material and we will discuss difficult concepts in class, but do not panic. Graduate school is a process.

There is no dignity here, but also no shame. If you spend time trying to maintain a facade of intelligence in front of your peers, you'll be wasting most of that time. We are all essentially idiots moonlighting as smart people. Learn to take criticism, internalize it, and adapt in line with its suggestions. Learn to hazard a guess, take a risk in discussion, and get corrected.

Patience and work trumps intelligence quotient. Get into the habit of working 12 hour days and weekends. Grow accustomed to running down rabbit holes, meticulously collecting and organizing data, writing multiple drafts of manuscripts, grant applications, and course papers. Learn how to step away from the internet, power down the cell phone, and turn off the television. The life of the successful scholar is characterized by focused, quiet contemplation. Brilliance is biological, but learnedness is acquirable through labor (which is good news for all of us).

There are multiple wrong answers and multiple right answers. There is a lot of ambiguity at play in the social sciences, but at the same time, we are not total relativists. Some theories are more compelling than others, but it is rarely the case that one theory explains all variation we see in the world. Arguments can be evaluated in terms of their internal logic as well as their empirical veracity. Most days, our job boils down to selecting the most compelling explanation (drawn from a pool of potentially compelling explanations) and empirically evaluating that explanation with the most correct method (drawn from a number of potential methods).

Finally, don't lose sight of the forest for the trees. Try to see how every day's tasks work in service to a broader goal whatever that looks like for you. Think big picture when you can.

How to Read

Of necessity, there is a rather large reading load in this course (especially during the front end of the semester, where most of your written work has not kicked in). You will probably find yourself getting overwhelmed at points and, to an extent, this is by design. Learning how to skim materials or read strategically is a valuable tool you need to develop in the course of your graduate education. This is not to say that you should read superficially; rather, read with a focused aim that extracts from manuscripts the following pieces of information:

Week 5 / Feb 29 / Political Violence, Rebellion, and Civil War

Literature Tracing Exercise #4 Due

- Boix, Carles. 2008. Economic Roots of Civil Wars and Revolutions in the Contemporary World. *World Politics*. 60(3): 390-437.
- Ross, Michael L. 2004. How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases. *International Organization*. 58: 35-67.
- Blatman, Chris. 2009. From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda. *American Political Science Review*. 103: 231-247.
- Brancati, Dawn and Jack L. Snyder. 2012. Time to Kill: The Impact of Election Timing on Postconflict Stability. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 57(5): 822-850.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review*. 97(1): 75-90.
- Wood, Jean Elizabeth. 2001. An Insurgent Path to Democracy: Popular Mobilization, Economic Interests, and Regime Transition in South Africa and El Salvador. *Comparative Political Studies*. 34(8): 862-888.

Week 6 / Mar 7 / Democracy and Democratization

Data Report #1 Due

- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. Modernization: Theory and Facts. *World Politics*. 49(2): 155-183.
- Boix, Carles. 2003. Introduction and Chapter 1. *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ziblatt, Daniel. 2006. How Did Europe Democratize? *World Politics*. 58(2): 311-338.
- Munck, Gerardo L. and Carol Skalnik Le. 1997. Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Politics*. 29(3): 343-362.
- Joseph, Richard. 1997. Democratization in Africa after 1989: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives. *Comparative Politics*. 29(3): 363-382.

Week 7 / Mar 14 / Autocracies and Dominant Party Systems

Data Report #2 Due

Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski. 2007. Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats. *Comparative Political Studies*. 40(11): 1279-1301.

Boix, Carles and Milan Svobik. 2013. The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions and Power-Sharing in Dictatorships. *The Journal of Politics*. 75(2): 300-316.

Ross, Michael. 2001. Does Oil Hinder Democracy? *World Politics*. 53(3): 325-361.

Mogaards, Matthijs. 2009. How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism. *Democratization*. 16(2): 399-423.

Magaloni, Beatriz and Ruth Kricheli. 2010. Political Order and One-Party Rule. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 13:123-143.

Greene, Kenneth F. 2010. The Political Economy of Authoritarian Single-Party Dominance. *Comparative Political Studies*. 43(7): 807-834.

Week 8 / Mar 28 / Democratic Representation and Accountability

Data Report #3 Due

Przeworski, Adam, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin. 1999. Chapters 1, 2, and 3. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge University Press.

Healy, Andrew and Neil Malhotra. 2013. Retrospective Voting Reconsidered. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 16: 285-306.

Powell, G. Bingham. 2000. Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*. Yale University Press.

Adams, James. 2012. Causes and Electoral Consequences of Party Policy Shifts in Multiparty Elections: Theoretical Results and Empirical Evidence. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 15: 401-419.

Rabinowitz, George and Stuart Elaine Macdonald. 1989. A Directional Theory of Issue Voting. *American Political Science Review*. 83(1): 93-121.

Week 9 / Apr 4 / Political Parties and Elections

No written work is due this week.

Aldrich, John H. 2011. Chapter 1. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. University of Chicago Press.

Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2012. A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics. *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3): 571-597.

Strom, Kaare. 1990. A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties. *American Journal of Political Science*. 34(2): 565-598.

Lipset, Seymour Martin and Stein Rokkan. 1990. Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments. In *Western European Party Systems*. Edited by Peter Mair. Oxford University Press.

Cox, Gary W. 1997. Chapters 2, 4, and 5. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge University Press.

Clark, Williams Roberts and Matt Golder. 2006. Rehabilitating Duverger's Theory: Testing the Mechanical and Strategic Modifying Effects of Electoral Laws. *Comparative Political Studies*. 39(6): 679-708.

Carey, John M. and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1995. Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank-Ordering of Electoral Formulas. *Electoral Studies*. 14(4): 417-439.

Week 10 / Apr 11 / Presidents and Parliaments

Focused Comparison Exercise Due.

Cheibub, José Antonio, Zachary Elkins, and Tom Ginsburg. 2014. Beyond Presidentialism and Parliamentarism. *British Journal of Political Science*. 44(3): 515-544.

Tsebelis, George. 1995. Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism, and Multipartyism. *British Journal of Political Science*. 25: 289-326.

Martin, Lanny W. and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2001. Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*. 45(1): 33-50.

Cheibub, José Antonio, Adam Przeworski, and Sebastián Saiegh. 2004. Government Coalitions and Legislative Success under Parliamentarism and Presidentialism. *British Journal of Political Science*. 34(4): 565-587.

Shugart, Matthew Soberg. 1995. The Electoral Cycle and Institutional Sources of Divided Government in Presidential Systems. *American Political Science Review*. 89(2): 327-343.

Samuels, David. 2004. Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy in Comparative Perspective. *American Political Science Review*. 98(3): 425-436.

Week 11 / Apr 18 / Political Corruption and Clientelism

No written work is due this week.

Kitschelt, Herbert. 2000. Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities. *Comparative Political Studies*. 33(6/7): 845-879.

Keefer, Philip. 2007. Clientelism, Credibility, and the Policy Choices of Young Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*. 51(4): 804-821.

Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin. *World Politics*. 55: 399-422.

Triesman, Daniel. 2007. What Have We Learned About the Causes of Corruption from Ten Years of Cross-National Empirical Research? *Annual Review of Political Science*. 10: 211-244.

Tavits, Margit. 2007. Clarity of Responsibility and Corruption. *American Journal of Political Science*. 51(1): 218-229.

Potter, Joshua D. and Margit Tavits. 2011. Curbing Corruption with Political Institutions. In *The International Handbook on the Economics of Corruption, Volume Two*. Edward Elgar.

Anderson, Christopher J. and Yuliya V. Tverdova. 2003. Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes toward Government in Contemporary Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*. 47(1): 91-109.

Week 12 / Apr 25 / Political Economy and Welfare State Politics

No written work is due this week.

Keefer, Philip. 2004. What Does Political Economy Tell Us About Economic Development and Vice Versa? *Annual Review of Political Science*. 7: 247-272.

Huber, Evelyn, Charles Ragin, and John Stephens. 1993. Social Democracy, Christian Democracy, Constitutional Structure, and the Welfare State. *American Journal of Sociology*. 99(3): 711-749.

Huber, Evelyn, Thomas J. Mustillo, and John D. Stevens. 2008. Politics and Social Spending in Latin America. *The Journal of Politics*. 70(2): 420-436.

Iversen, Torben and David Soskice. 2006. Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions. *American Political Science Review*. 100: 165-181.

Lizzeri, Alessandro and Nicola Persico. 2001. The Provision of Public Goods under Alternative Political

Week 13 / May 2 / Political Decentralization and Federalism

No written work is due this week.

Wibbels, Erik. 2006. Madison in Baghdad? Decentralization and Federalism in Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 9: 165-188.

Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks. 2003. Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance. *The American Political Science Review*. 97(2): 233-243.

Rodden, Jonathan. 2002. The Dilemma of Fiscal Federalism: Grants and Fiscal Performance around the World. *American Journal of Political Science*. 46(3): 670-687.

Falleti, Tulia G. 2005. A Sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective. *American Political Science Review*. 99(3): 327-346.

Desposato, Scott W. 2004. The Impact of Federalism on National Party Cohesion in Brazil. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 29(2): 259-285.

Brancati, Dawn. 2006. Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flame of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism? *International Organization*. 58: 35-67.

May 6 at 12:00 PM: Grant Proposals Due