COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the broad and ever more heterogeneous field of Comparative Politics. First, we will very briefly examine comparative methods and discuss different strategies of investigation. We will then analyze a variety of theoretical approaches and assess their usefulness. Finally, we will discuss analyses of a wide range of substantive issues. In this way, you will become familiar with the pluralism of extant approaches and the most important research questions and answers in Comparative Politics.

I want you to come up with your own position on the numerous methodological, theoretical, and substantive controversies in Comparative Politics. In addition to active participation in class discussion, I therefore want you to address issue-oriented questions (which I will distribute) in three essays of 2-3 double-spaced pp. (which you will distribute electronically to your classmates by 5:00 p.m. the Sunday before class—with a HEAVY late penalty—and which everybody is supposed to read before the seminar session) [you will choose the date for your three short essays], one paper of 5 double-spaced pp., and one paper or research design of 10 double-spaced pp. (due in mid-October and late November, respectively). In order to make sure you can discuss issues "on the spot", you will also do a 3 hr. exercise during the final-exam period in December in which you will write two short essays about questions I will provide—a good preparation for the Preliminary Exam in Comparative Politics.

One of the fundamental capabilities that political scientists need is finding out the basic argument and theoretical contribution of a text and summarizing it in three sentences—literally! Therefore, you will write 3-sentence "summaries" of the basic argument and contribution of three of the readings for week one (i.e., choose any three of the last six articles assigned for week one & summarize the main argument & contribution of that article in three sentences per article). If all three "summaries" are good, you will get an "A" for the exercise and be done. If any of the three "summaries" is not that good, you will write three “summaries” for week two; if all three of those summaries are good, you will get an "A-" and be done. If not, you will try again, and get a B+ if you succeed; if not, you’ll continue.

Your course grade will be computed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>3-sentence &quot;summaries&quot;</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3 pp. papers</td>
<td>5% each</td>
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<td>5 pp. paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 pp. paper or research design</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 hr. exercise</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOTS of class participation</td>
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The workload for this course is substantial, but I will do my best to make the seminar useful, interesting, and even enjoyable.

UT’s honor code governs all work in this course and will be strictly enforced. For example, no internet “imports” in your papers; all literal or slightly altered quotes in any written work—including 3-sentence summaries—must be marked by "..." and credited properly; paraphrasing also must be credited; etc. Please re-read the rules or ask me if you have any doubts. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from UT's Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259. All SSD rules (e.g., 5 business days of prior notice for accommodations) will be followed strictly.

The following eight books are required reading and are available for purchase in the UT Co-op bookstore.
- Mark Lichbach & Alan Zuckerman, eds., Comparative Politics, second ed. (2009)
- Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel, Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy (2005)
- Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens, Capitalist Development and Democracy (1992)
- Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (1979)
- Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement, revised ed. (2010).

In addition, I recommend (but do not require) the interviews with many of the leading scholars in Comparative Politics in Gerardo Munck & Richard Snyder, ed. Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics (2007), also available for purchase in the Co-op bookstore.

All of the other readings are accessible on our course site GOV 390K in Blackboard; you can read them on screen, or download & print. If there are any problems, pls. let me know asap. Notice that most of our course readings are fundamental contributions that you should command for your future career (and, not coincidentally, the preliminary exam!). Many of these readings are true "classics" that you will re-read for the rest of your professional life. In doing those readings, please keep in mind the study questions that I will hand out for each week (questions for weeks 1 - 4 are attached to this syllabus). We will use these questions to structure class discussion; thus, they allow you to prepare your own participation.

Iron law of participation: Every student has to make at least one substantive comment in each class session; I will call on students in case that should be required. Also: please present & summarize your 2-3 pp. papers in class—don’t read them (all of us will have read them already).

My office hours will be in BAT 4.126 on Monday, 1:30 - 3:00 pm; Wednesday 12:00 noon - 3:00 p.m.; or by appointment (2-7253; kweyland@austin.utexas.edu). Please feel free to talk to me about any aspect of the course or of the profession or other matters of interest.
I. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

week 01 (September 10): Classical Contributions and Recent Debates on Methods


II. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

week 02 (September 17): Systems Theory & Culturalism

Marc Ross, Culture in Comparative Political Analysis. In Mark Lichbach & Alan Zuckerman, eds. Comparative Politics, 2nd ed. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), ch. 6.
Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), read chs. 1, 7, and 10 carefully and chs. 2, 4-5, 8-9, and 11 “fast.”

week 03 (September 24): Marxism, Neo-Marxism, & Economic Structuralism

Martin Carnoy. *The State and Political Theory* (Stanford UP, 1984), pp. 44-140, 172-207, 246-61. **NOTE:** No need to understand all the intricacies of the very complicated discussion in chap. 4; just get a sense of the overall gist of that line of reasoning.


week 04 (October 1): State-Centered Theory and Historical Institutionalism


Questions for 5 pp. paper distributed at the end of class on October 1.
week 05 (October 8): Rational Choice I


5 pp. paper is due on Friday, October 12, at 12:00 noon, in my mailbox in 2.104 BAT.

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week 06 (October 15): Rational Choice II

**PLS NOTE: This session will need to be rescheduled due to a conference – we’ll decide together.**

III. THEORETICAL ISSUES

week 07 (October 22): Political Economy & Development: First World


week 08 (October 29): Political Economy & Development: Third World


week 09 (November 5): Revolution

Theda Skocpol. States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge UP, 1979), read chs. 1 - 4 and Conclusion. Skim rest.

Questions for 10 pp. paper distributed on Nov. 12 at the end of class; if you prefer to do a research design instead, please consult with me during that week (or better, before!!) on a specific topic and make sure to follow the guidelines outlined in Przeworski and Salomon, “On the Art of Writing Proposals” [= last item in Blackboard]

week 10 (November 12): Political Regimes & Regime Transitions


week 11 (November 19): Political Participation I: Political Parties and Elections

week 12 (November 26): Political Participation II: Interest Groups, Elites, and Social Movements


10 pp. paper or research design is due on Wednesday, November 28, at 10:00 a.m., in my mailbox in 2.104 BAT.

week 13 (December 3): Nationalism, Ethnicity – & Conflict?


**Friday, December 14, 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.: Three-Hour Exercise**

*Note: Date and time are set by the University administration—not my fault!*

Final note:

Recommended compendia and reference works for your prelim preparation and your whole professional career:
Series of Oxford Handbooks (2006 ff)
*Annual Review of Political Science*, recent volumes.
Questions about Methodological Approaches

1) In your view, should Comparative Politics try to come up with general laws, as Przeworski & Teune advocate, or is this endeavor futile and misleading? Why?

2) According to Przeworski & Teune, the social sciences are torn between nomothetic and idiographic approaches. Which position does Sartori tend to? Why? Do his recommendations make sense, in your view?

3) To what extent and under what conditions can the comparative method be successful? How can it be applied in the most useful way?

4) In your view, are King, Keohane & Verba (as presented by Collier, Seawright, and Munck) right in deriving recommendations for qualitative analysis from quantitative methodological approaches? Why or why not?

5) In your view, how valid are Collier et al.’s criticisms of King, Keohane & Verba? How valid and useful are the alternative approaches discussed by Bennett and Elman?

6) In his discussion of the goals and purposes of comparative social science, is Ragin closer to Przeworski & Teune or to Sartori? For what reasons?

7) How persuasive is Ragin's explanation and assessment of the problems and issues that “diversity” and its constitutive features, such as conjunctural, heterogeneous causation, create for prevailing approaches to comparative social research?

8) How much potential do Morton & Williams see for experiments in Comparative Politics? What is your own view on this issue?

9) What are the underlying differences between the radial categories proposed by Collier and Mahon and the classical categorization codified by Sartori?

10) In your view, do radial categories bring a conceptual improvement over classical categorization? Why or why not?
Questions about Systems Theory and Culturalism

1) Where does systems theory fall on the nomothetic vs. idiographic dimension? Why?

2) How valid and useful is Almond's list and specification of the goals and functions of political systems?

3) From where does systems theory see political change arise? What does this viewpoint imply for the role of politics, and how reasonable is it?

4) In your view, how valid and useful are functional explanations? In what ways do they differ from other types of explanation, such as causal explanations? And do these differences constitute improvements or not? Why?

5) In your view, can Weber's concept of legitimacy—and the three types of legitimacy that he distinguishes—serve for empirical analysis? Why or why not?

6) Compare and contrast Ross’s and Elkins & Simeon’s positions on the proper role of culture in comparative analysis. Which viewpoint do you find more convincing, and why?

7) In your view, are there valid and useful methodological tools besides surveys (cf. Inglehart & Welzel) that Comparativists can productively use to advance or assess cultural explanations?

8) What type of theoretical argument are Inglehart and Welzel advancing? In particular, is it culturalist? Why or why not?

9) Do you find Inglehart and Welzel’s claims on the political consequences of mass values and value changes (especially in part II) convincing? Why or why not?

10) In methodological terms, how good is the Inglehart & Welzel book?
Questions about Marxism, Neo-Marxism, and Economic Structuralism

1) What are the similarities and main differences between Marxism and systems theory?

2) What are the similarities and main differences between Marxism and culturalist approaches?

3) In your view, how valid and useful are the typically Marxist assumptions and arguments concerning the state (as discussed by Carnoy)?

4) Do you consider Gramsci's notion of "hegemony" or Weber's concept of "legitimacy" more conceptually valid and analytically useful? Why?

5) Contrary to Marxist hopes, no socialist revolution has ever occurred in an advanced capitalist country. In your view, can Neo-Marxism successfully account for this fact? Why or why not?

6) In your view, how valid and insightful are Marxist explanations of underdevelopment?

7) After the fall of Communism, is Marxism dead as a theory? In your view, how will it have to be adapted? What valid and useful insights – if any – can it still offer us?

8) What is left of Marxism after Wright's reconstruction? In your view, does it sacrifice or preserve the distinctive characteristics of Marxism?

9) How—if at all—is Evans’ optimistic vision related to Marxism? In your view, how persuasive is his reasoning? Why?

10) In your view, does the profound economic crisis of 2008 ff justify or even require a revitalization of scholarly thinking along Marxian lines? Why or why not?
Questions about State-Centered Theory and Historical Institutionalism

1) What are the main similarities and differences between the state-centered/historical-institutionalist literature and systems theory?

2) What are the main similarities and differences between the state-centered/historical-institutionalist literature and culturalism?

3) What are the main similarities and differences between the state-centered/historical-institutionalist literature and (neo-)Marxism?

4) What is a theoretically valid and empirically useful definition of the concept “institution”? 

5) How can we theoretically define and empirically identify “state interests” and “state autonomy”? In your view, to what extent can the state attain such autonomy?

6) In your view, could the application of radial categories, i.e. of a prototypical notion of the state and of diminished subtypes, resolve the issues raised by Migdal? Why or why not?

7) In your view, does historical institutionalism advance a convincing account of the role of ideas and of social learning in policy-making? Why or why not?

8) In your view, is historical institutionalism increasingly adopting a micro-foundational approach and therefore being absorbed by rational choice? Why or why not?

9) In your view, are the directions in which Mahoney & Thelen point historical institutionalism likely to strengthen or weaken this approach? Why?

10) In the last 20 years, heavy state interventionism in many countries has ceded to economic liberalization, and many authoritarian and Communist regimes with (seemingly) strong states have collapsed. In your view, is the state-centered literature therefore obsolete?