POLI 7941: International Human Rights

Fall 2015
Thursdays, 2:00-4:50pm
210 Stubbs Hall

Instructor
Christopher Sullivan
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Office Hours: by appointment
A note on office hours – please email me ahead of time to let me know what you would like to discuss during office hours so that I can prepare to assist in the best way possible.

Course Description: This course is directed towards filling gaps within the empirical literature on human rights violation/state repression. We will address the “state of the art” research on personal integrity violations (genocide/politicide, torture, disappearances, mass killing/atrocities, mass arrests, detention) as well as civil liberties restrictions (constraints on speech, association, assembly and religion). We will rigorously go through the available work on the causes and consequences of human rights violations as well as the constraints that can be imposed to limit repression. We will then attempt to develop it further, through discussion of existing limitations, novel contributions, and original research.

The bulk of the course is article focused. We will review selections from a few core books (listed below). But the primary focus of review, discussion, presentation, and writing will be geared towards understanding (1) how contemporary research on human rights develops through article length manuscripts and (2) how to reproduce the organizational form of such manuscripts in order to advance new research towards publication. The objective is to push students taking this class to the forefront of the subfield.

Suggested Texts:


Boix, Carles. 2015. Political Order and Inequality. Cambridge University Press. 978-1107461079

The above books will be made available on library reserve and in the campus bookstore. Additional supplementary readings will be made available online or in Middleton library. Academic articles may be accessed through scholar.google.com or the library’s website.
Course Requirements:

Discussion

This is a graduate research seminar class focused on group discussion. To help facilitate the class discussion, it is imperative that students come prepared to each class having read that week’s materials. Emphasis will be placed on quality of participation, including responses to the readings and to other students’ comments. In addition to participation in group discussion, students will occasionally be called upon at random to diagram the theoretical argument or empirical model employed in the texts under review. The objective is to identify the core independent and dependent variables as well as the causal mechanisms underlying dynamic processes.

In addition, students will be asked twice a semester to serve as a lead discussant on a particular topic. Lead discussants will be responsible for jump-starting the conversation on half of the required readings. Rather than a formal presentation, students should think of themselves as a discussant at a conference or workshop. Students should summarize the primary contributions of the article, highlight some potential weaknesses, and provide constructive feedback on a set of papers with a common theme. The objective is to identify not simply where there are existing limitations with the current state of the art, but also how improvements could be made. The best discussants can make readers think about the work in a new way, or think about new implications we can draw from a piece of work for the literature as a whole.

Data Presentation

In addition to participation, there are two graded presentations for the course. The use of slides is encouraged.

The first presentation requires that each student identify a data source relevant to the study of human rights. A list of suggestions is provided in the syllabus below (Week 6), and additional materials will be considered. To avoid duplicating material, I will assign the data sources each student will present. If you have a particular source of data that is relevant to your work and you would like to present, please email me a request no later than the 4th week of the semester (Sept. 17).

For the presentation, you will be asked to elaborate on the strengths, weaknesses, existing uses and potential future extensions for your dataset in 10-12 minutes. You do not need to follow these questions exactly or this format, but I am interested in discussing the following: What concepts are being operationalized and how are they measured? What raw source materials are used to generate these data? Does this represent an advancement over prior measures? What potential sources of measurement biases exist? How have these data been used in existing work? And what is one new area of research where these data could be used to study human rights? (note that you are not being asked to present any original analyses, but you may need to download and ‘open up’ the data to better understand how it is structured and how it may be best utilized)

Research Presentation

During the final week of class (December 3rd) you will be asked to present your final research paper (discussed below). This presentation should similarly be 10-12 minutes in length and resemble a conference presentation. Discuss the puzzle that you are trying to address, how it has been treated in existing research, your theoretical arguments, and how those arguments will be tested. The closer this looks to an academic conference presentation, the better.
As with the paper, you are not expected to have analytical results at this stage. But you should have a research design that includes a discussion of the data and identification strategy. This is a chance to receive feedback from peers in the course as well as encourage inter-project dialogue.

**Final Paper**

The final seminar paper should be a preliminary draft article up to and including the research design section. The topic of the research is the student’s choice (discussed with the professor). Primarily the student should seek to extend the existing literature or take the area in a new direction. The paper should not exceed 30 pages in text (including notes, tables, references and so forth).

As the scientific study of human right relatively underdeveloped this task should not be that difficult. The paper is open to geographic location, time period, and methodological technique (i.e., econometrics, computer simulation, case studies, or some combination), as long as the one(s) selected is(are) appropriate for the particular research question put forth. Throughout the course we shall be going over all of these differences in some detail, so if you do not feel comfortable with one, you will be.

To assist in the development of the project, a two-page proposal is due in class on Thursday, October 22nd. The proposal will present your research question, a summary of your preliminary argument and research design, and include as much detail as possible on the data you will use to test the argument. I also strongly encourage you to come in to discuss your paper ideas with me prior to October 22nd.

Final papers are due by noon on December 10th.

**Grading Policy:** The grading breakdown is as follows:

Class Participation: 20%, Two Discussant Presentations: 2x 5%, Data Presentation: 10%, Research Presentation: 10%, Final Paper: 50%

A+ = 97-100%
A = 94-96%
A- = 90-93%
B+ = 87-89%
B = 84-86%
B- = 80-83%
C+ = 77-79%
C = 74-76%
C- = 70-73%
D+ = 67-69%
D = 64-66%
D- = 60-63%
F = 59% or below

- The letter grade A, including A+ and A-, denotes distinguished mastery of the course material.
- The letter grade B, including B+ and B-, denotes good mastery of the course material.
- The letter grade C, including C+ and C-, denotes acceptable mastery of the course material.
- The letter grade D, including D+ and D-, denotes minimally acceptable achievement.
- F denotes failure.
Cell / Internet Policy – Put your cell phones on vibrate and refrain from using them during class. Laptops can be used for note taking. But your attention should be directed exclusively to the subject matter being discussed in class. (This means no facebook, no email, no google, etc.) Most of us are wired most of the time—and being wired has amazing advantages. However, being unwired also has major advantages. Your engagement in the course and opportunities for collective learning will be enhanced by maintaining focus on the classroom here and now.

Late Papers – Late papers will not be accepted except in instances of medical necessity (with a doctor’s note) or death of an immediate relative (with an obituary or other official notice).

General Statement on Academic Integrity:

Louisiana State University adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth guidelines for student behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are expected to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found online at www.lsu.edu/saa. It is your responsibility as a student at LSU to know and understand the academic standards for our community.

Students who are suspected of violating the Code of Conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Advocacy and Accountability. For undergraduate students, a first academic violation could result in a zero grade on the assignment or failing the class and disciplinary probation until graduation. For a second academic violation, the result could be suspension from LSU. For graduate students, suspension is the appropriate outcome for the first offense.

Plagiarism and Citation Method:

As a student at LSU, it is your responsibility to refrain from plagiarizing the academic property of another and to utilize appropriate citation method for all coursework. The most frequently used citation method in political science is internal citation (e.g., Sullivan 2015). I would encourage you to follow this format and include footnotes where relevant; leaving full citations for a ‘Works Referenced’ page that follows the main text.¹ Ignorance of the citation method is not an excuse for academic misconduct. Remember there is a difference between paraphrasing and quoting and how to properly cite each respectively. If you have questions regarding what is appropriate, please consult with the library’s tutorials on avoiding plagiarism and proper citation formats.

Group work and unauthorized assistance:

All work must be completed without assistance unless explicit permission for group or partner work is given by the faculty member. This is critical so that the professor can assess your performance on each assignment. If a group/partner project is assigned, the student may still have individual work to complete. Read the syllabus and assignment directions carefully. You might have a project with group work and a follow up report that is independently written. When in doubt, e-mail the faulty member or ask during a class session. Seeking clarification is your responsibility as a student. Assuming group/partner work is okay without permission constitutes a violation of the LSU Code of Student Conduct.

¹ http://www.lib.umd.edu/tl/guides/citing-chicago-ad
**Students requiring special accommodation:** Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak with the Disability Services and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. This publication/material is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Disability Services, 115 Johnston Hall, (225) 578-5919.

Week 1 – August 27th

- Introduction and Discussion – What are Human Rights and What Are Human Rights Violations?

Supplemental Reading

Week 2 – September 3rd

- Theories of the State
  - Boix, Charles 2015. *Political Order and Inequality* intro(1-15), ch 2
  - Scott, James. 1999. *Seeing Like a State*. Ch 1 (pp 11-53)

Supplemental Reading

**Week 3 – September 10th**

- Threat-Response Models

**Supplemental Reading**


**Week 4 – September 17th**

- Varieties of Repression

Supplemental Readings

Week 5 – September 24th
- The Conflict-Repression Nexus

Supplemental Reading


Birnir, Johanna and Ted Gurr – Minorities at Risk http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/


- Afghanistan, Iraq, Mexico, Philippines, Colombia, Pakistan, Vietnam

- Colombia, Guatemala, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone


Supplemental Reading


Week 7 – October 8th
Coercive Institutions
  - Selected Chapters

Supplemental Readings
- Tilly, Charles. 1985 “War making and state making as organized crime.”
  -

Week 8 – October 15th
Democracy and Repression
  - Selected Chapters

Supplemental Readings –

**Week 9 – October 22nd**

- **Two Page Research Proposal Due**

- Principal Agent Arguments

**Supplemental Reading**

- Jentzsch, Corinna, Stathis N. Kalyvas, and Livia Isabella Schubiger. Forthcoming "Militias in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*

Week 10 – October 29th
- Fall Break

Week 11 – November 5th
International Law

Supplemental Readings

Week 12 – November 12th
- Naming and Shaming / Intervention


**Supplemental Reading**


**Week 13 – November 19th**

- Where is the Cutting Edge / Getting Published

**Supplemental Reading:**

- Daxecker, Ursula. Forthcoming "Dirty Hands: Government Torture and Terrorism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*

Week 14 – November 26th
- Thanksgiving

Week 15 – December 3rd
- Research Presentations

Week 16 – Final Exams – No Class

**Friday December 10th. Final papers are due via email by 12pm**