Course Description

This course is a proseminar, i.e., a course designed primarily to provide the student with an introduction to the major concepts, theories, methods, and debates appropriate to the field of comparative politics. As such, and given the rather diverse nature of the field, a wide range of subject areas are confronted through an examination of prominent and representative samples from the relevant bodies of scholarly literature.

The field of comparative politics is very rich and varied, both substantively and methodologically. These characteristics represent both a strength and a weakness, especially given the task that the course confronts in seeking a balanced and representative introduction to the field. In constructing the course, then, certain judgments must be made, certain compromises must be accepted, and certain values must be balanced off against others. What the course does claim to do is to provide an introduction to important themes and debates through an examination of prominent works and scholars.

Course Requirements

[1] In-Class Performance: Students are expected to come to each seminar meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Everyone must be sure to come to class sessions ready to do his or her part in making the session a worthwhile learning environment. Students rely on each other in many important ways, and you have an obligation to your colleagues to pull your weight in the seminar. Needless to say, this role can be played only if you are in attendance and prepared thoroughly. (20 percent of the course grade)

[2] Three Short Papers: Each student will be obliged on three occasions to prepare a short paper that analyzes and synthesizes a particular week’s readings. Each paper should be 6-8 pages (typed, double-spaced, normal fonts, fully cited). These papers are due on the day the topics are discussed in seminar. (15 percent each: 45 percent of the course grade)

[3] Research Paper: Each student will have the opportunity to pursue in more depth one specific area of the comparative politics literature through the execution of a research paper. Because by its nature the course must cover a wide variety of subjects in a single semester, this assignment will provide a chance to develop a deeper understanding of one part of comparative politics that is of particular interest to the student. This paper should be approximately 15-20 pages (typed, double-spaced, normal fonts, fully cited, not including cover page, references, etc.), should take the basic form of a conference paper or journal article, and is due on or before the final class session on May 2, 2014. (35 percent of the course grade)
Required Texts

Each of the following books is required for the course and is available at bookstores that serve the LSU community. In addition to these works, a number of articles and chapters are included on the syllabus that follows.


Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (1985). Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge University Press).

Samuel P. Huntington (1968). Political Order in Changing Societies (Yale University Press).


Schedule of Weekly Topics and Readings (Date_

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[1] Introduction to the Course (1/17)

[2] The Historical Development of the Field of Comparative Politics (1/24)


[3] **Concepts, Methods, and Research Design in Comparative Politics**


[4] **What is the State?**


[7] **Democracy and Democratization – II** (3/7)


[8] **Non-Democratic Regimes** (3/14)


[9] Identities, Groups, Nations, and Nationalism (3/21)


Samuel P. Huntington (1968). Political Order in Changing Societies (Yale University Press).


