Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852)

This course is the core seminar for the field of comparative politics in the political science Ph.D. program. The purpose of this course is to equip doctoral students with solid understanding of classical and state-of-art literature in the field of “mainstream” comparative politics. It provides an introduction to the dominant questions, theories, and methodology in comparative politics. Comparative politics is a vast field of research, and this course covers some of the most important, the most widely and intensively studied topics that comparatists have delved into for the past five decades. After preliminary sessions on research paradigms and methodology, the seminar centers on five key substantive topics: 1) the modern state and nationalism, 2) democracies and dictatorships, 3) political institutions, 4) collective (in)action and social movement, and 5) political economy.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1) Reviews of the required readings (30%). **For eight of the weeks of the course** each student will write a short review of the week’s readings (around one single spaced page). Reviews should be uploaded on Moodle by **noon on the day before the seminar meets** (i.e., Sunday noon). Reviews should include a concise summary of the argument and evidence, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and raise questions for discussion. Consider the following questions such as:

*Substantive*: What question motivates the research? Why is it important? What is the goal of the researcher – description, explanation, prediction? What is the theory? What is the logic of argumentation? Are the arguments logically consistent? Are the concepts in the theory clearly defined? What is the unit of analysis? Are the key actors in the theory individuals, groups, societies, or states – does it matter? Is the story “compelling”? What are the implications of the theory?

*Methodological*: Does the work principally generate ideas, test causal hypotheses, or develop theory, or some combination of these? What is the central empirical strategy? What precisely is being compared? Is the comparison explicit, and if so how were the cases selected? Is there an implicit comparative design? Does this strategy adequately test the theory? Are the theoretical concepts validly measured? What evidence is presented that is said to confirm or disconfirm the argument? Can you suggest a further or better way to evaluate the author’s claims?
2) Participation and a brief class presentation (20%). Attendance is mandatory. All students are required to have completed the required readings for each week before class begins, and everyone should be prepared to discuss the readings during class. Students are also required to make a short presentation (about 10 minutes) of the week’s readings to the class. A presentation should assess the work’s strengths and weaknesses, addressing questions similar to those listed above.

3) Literature review paper (25%). Students are expected to write a critical literature review paper on the topic closely related to this course. The length of the paper is approximately 8-10 single spaced pages, excluding figures, tables, references, and appendices. Students should frequently discuss their papers with the instructor from early on. The topic must be approved by the instructor by February 19. Students must submit a hard copy of an abstract, outline, and bibliography by February 26, and submit a hard copy of the final version by March 23 (Friday). Before you begin, read Jeffrey Knopf’s 2006 PS article, “Doing a Literature Review.”

4) Final research paper (25%). Students are expected to write a research paper based on the critical literature review paper (see above) they wrote in the middle of the semester. The length of the paper is approximately 10-15 single spaced pages, excluding figures, tables, references, and appendices. Based on the instructor’s comments and suggestions on the literature review they wrote, students must submit a hard copy of a first rough draft that contains research questions, research design, potential theoretical arguments, preliminary evidence (if applicable), and bibliography by April 23. A hard copy of the final version must be submitted by May 11 (Friday). Again, I strongly recommend that students should frequently discuss their papers with the instructor.

READINGS

Seminar discussions are based on the combination of classic works and major recent contributions, so that the required readings are from both books and journal articles. The following five books are required. All other required readings (articles and other book chapters) are available on Moodle.


SCHEDULE

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<tr>
<td>Week 4. Feb. 5</td>
<td>The Modern State</td>
<td>Week 12. Apr. 2</td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>Week 13 Apr. 9</td>
<td>Parliamentarism/Presidentialism</td>
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*Note that the schedule is subjective to change.*
TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS
(subject to change)

I. INTRODUCTION, POWER, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Required reading


Recommended reading on the state of comparative research


Graduate-level textbooks to prepare for the comprehensive exam. Boix & Stokes (2009) is the most comprehensive, Lichbach & Zuckerman (2012) provides three research traditions, and Clark & the Golder (2013) is analytical.


Background reading on the philosophy of social science and different epistemological and ontological traditions


Recommended reading on writing

II. CAUSALITY, COMPARATIVE METHODS, AND STATISTICAL REGULARITY

Required reading

Recommended reading

Further reading

**Background reading**


**III. THE MODERN STATE: HISTORICAL FORMATION AND ITS PECULIARITY**


**Required reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Further reading**


**Background reading**

IV. NATIONS AND NATIONALISM


Required reading


Recommended reading


Further reading


**Background reading**


**V. POLITICAL REGIMES: CONCEPTIONS, MEASURES, MEANINGS**


**Required reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Further reading**


**Background reading**


**VI. THE ORIGINS OF REGIMES: A MACRO-HISTORICAL VIEW**


**Required reading**


**Recommended reading**


Further reading


Background reading

VII. THE DYNAMICS OF REGIME TRANSITIONS


Required reading


Recommended reading


Further reading


**VIII. THE POLITICS OF DICTATORSHIPS**


**Required reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Further reading**

Background reading


IX. PARLIAMENTARISM AND PRESIDENTIALISM


Required reading


Recommended reading


Further reading


**Background reading**


**X. ELECTORAL RULES AND PARTY SYSTEMS**


**Required reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Background reading**


**XI. COLLECTIVE (IN)ACTION AND MOVEMENT POLITICS**


**Required reading**


**Recommended reading**


**Further reading**


**Background reading**


**Recommended reading on revolutions and high-risk collective actions**

XII. POLITICAL ECONOMY: THE POLITICS OF GROWTH AND INEQUALITY

Review of the course. The 18th Brumaire model revisited. “Plurality of worlds” revisited. “Politics is the art of the possible.”

Required reading

Recommended reading

Further reading on growth and the developmental state

Further reading on redistributive politics and the welfare state

Further reading on globalization


Background reading