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 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 epistemology and methodology, the seminar centers on five key substantive topics: i) the modern nation-state, ii) democracies and dictatorships, iii) political institutions, iv) social movements and revolutions, and v) 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 (no more than one single spaced page). Reviews should be emailed to me 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 (no more than 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 20**. Students must submit a hard copy of an abstract, outline, and bibliography by **March 6**, and submit a hard copy of the final version by **March 20**.

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 24**. A hard copy of the final version must be submitted by **May 8**. 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 articles. The following six books are required. All other required readings (articles and other book chapters) are available on Moodle.


**GRADING**

I put more emphasis on good faith, serious effort on the part of students than on sheer brilliance. If students do all of the assignments seriously, then they will almost certainly receive at least a B for the course regardless of the “quality” of the work.

**SCHEDULE**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2. Jan. 23</td>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>Week 11. Mar. 27</td>
<td>Parliamentarism/Presidentialism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4. Feb. 6</td>
<td>The Modern State</td>
<td>Week 13 Apr. 10</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5. Feb. 13</td>
<td>Nations and Nationalism</td>
<td>Week 14 Apr. 17</td>
<td>Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6. Feb. 20</td>
<td>Political Regimes</td>
<td>Week 15 Apr. 24</td>
<td>Movement Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7. Feb. 27</td>
<td>Mardi Gras Holiday</td>
<td>Week 16 May 1</td>
<td>Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency</td>
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<td>Week 8. Mar. 6</td>
<td>The Origins of Regimes</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  

Recommended:  

Power  

The state of comparative research  

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

Writing a thesis  

Background:  

The concepts of power and the political  

The philosophy of social science and different ontological traditions  
II. CAUSALITY, COMPARATIVE METHODS AND STATISTICAL REGULARITY

Required:


Recommended:


**Background:**


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

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**


**IV. NATIONS AND NATIONALISM: THE SPIRIT OF THE STATE**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
For a useful survey on competing theories of nationalism, read:

**Background:**

**V. POLITICAL REGIMES: THE CONCEPTION AND MEANING**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**

VI. THE ORIGINS OF POLITICAL REGIMES: A MACRO-LONG-TERM VIEW

Required:


Recommended:


Further readings:

Background:


VII. THE DYNAMICS OF REGIME TRANSITIONS

Required:


Recommended:


Further readings:


**VIII. THE POLITICS OF DICTATORSHIPS**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Further readings:**


Background:

IX. PARLIAMENTARISM AND PRESIDENTIALISM

Required:

Further readings:
- University Press.

**Background:**


**X. ELECTORAL RULES AND PARTY SYSTEMS**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**


**XI. MOVEMENT POLITICS: COLLECTIVE (IN)ACTION, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**


XII. MODERNITY, COLONIALISM, AND INSURGENCY

Required:

Further readings:

- High-risk collective action
- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. States and Revolutions. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Global history, postcolonialism and subaltern studies