Political Science 9566A
Comparative Politics
Western University
Fall 2019

Professor Bruce Morrison
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Office hours: Wednesday 1:30-3 or by appointment

This course offers a graduate-level introduction to the major themes and approaches in comparative politics. Among the points of emphasis: states and state formation; regime change and its causes; development and dependency; the varied institutional character of modern democracies; political culture; and comparative political economy. These topics will be explored in such a way as to maximize student exposure to key concepts, theoretical approaches, and methodological options.

Learning Outcomes: Participants in this course will acquire: (a) an understanding of comparative methodology and an appreciation of its applications; (b) substantial familiarity with the major concepts and lines of theory employed in the sub-discipline of comparative politics; (c) a strong and critical understanding of the character of economic, social, and political development; and (d) an awareness of the degree of variation that exists across the globe especially when it comes to political outcomes, as well as of the major causes of variation.

Requirements:

(a) Reading commentaries: you will prepare two (three for PhD students) short papers of 3-4 pages in length, each of which will offer critical consideration of the assigned reading materials for a particular week. You may emphasize any theme or themes within the readings, and you need not cover all of the assigned items for the week. The aim is to identify what is at stake in the selected material, evaluate the approach of the author or authors, and reflect briefly upon how the puzzle or debate in question might in your view best be addressed. A longer description of this assignment is posted on our seminar website. These papers must be handed in before the week’s seminar begins. Grade: 20%.

(b) Seminar presentation: you will deliver one substantial presentation, of 15-20 minutes (up to 25 minutes for PhD students), which will offer a brief introduction to some (but not necessarily all) of the week’s readings as well as an additional reading component (one extra journal article or book chapter for MA students, two for PhD students) chosen by the presenter. In addition to effective summary and integration of the selected readings, you should raise questions and challenges in such a way as to stimulate seminar discussion in the time to follow. A longer description of this assignment is posted on our seminar website. Your presentation and your reading commentaries must be provided on different weeks. Grade: 20%.

(c) Seminar participation: you will be expected to provide consistent, informed, and active participation throughout the term. Read the material, reflect on it before and during the seminar, and engage in the seminar discussion in an enthusiastic as well as open-minded fashion. Grades will be distributed based not just on the frequency but also the quality of your oral contributions to the seminar. Missing seminar meetings without cause will affect your grade. If you don’t attend at least ten sessions during the term I will not accept your research paper. Grade: 20%.
(d) **Research paper**: you will write a research paper (16-18 pages for Masters students, 22-25 pages for Doctoral students) on a subject related to the themes and empirical content of the seminar. Early in the term, we will discuss in detail the expectations regarding this assignment. *Grade: 40%.*

**COURSE READINGS:**

**Introduction (September 5)**

No assigned readings.

**Comparative Theory and Method (September 12)**


**Recommended:**


Gerald Schneider, “Causal Description: Moving Beyond Stamp Collecting in Political Science.” *European Political Science* vol. 9, no. 1 (2010).

Markus Haverland, “If Similarity is the Challenge – Congruence Analysis Should Be Part of the Answer.” *European Political Science* vol. 9, no. 1 (2010).


Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 22, no. 1 (1980).

Development and Democratization (September 19)


Recommended:


Dependency and the Developmental State (September 26)


Recommended:

The State, War, and Regime Change (October 3)


Recommended:
**Institutionalism and Implications (October 10)**


*Recommended:*


JM Carey, “Parchment, Equilibria, and Institutions.” *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 33, nos. 6-7 (2000).


**Transitology and the Historical Turn in Democratization Studies (October 17)**


Capoccia, Giovanni, and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond.” *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 43, nos. 8/9: (2010).


*Recommended:*


Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
Stephen E. Hanson, “The Founding of the French Third Republic.” Comparative Political Studies vol. 43, nos. 8/9 (2010).

Electoral Systems (October 24)

Alan Renwick, “Electoral Reform in Europe since 1945.” West European Politics vol. 34, no. 3 (May 2011).

Recommended:
Laura Wills-Otero, “Electoral Systems in Latin America: Explaining the Adoption of Proportional Representation Systems During the Twentieth Century.” *Latin American Politics and Society* vol. 51, no. 3 (Fall 2009).


**Parties and Party Systems (October 31)**


**Recommended:**


Systems of Government (November 14)


Recommended:

Contentious Politics: Revolutions, Ethnic Conflict, and Civil Wars (November 21)

Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 2.


Recommended:
Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapters 1 and 3.

**Culture and Politics (November 28)**


*Recommended:*


**Comparative Political Economy (December 5)**


Recommended: