Professor Bruce Morrison  
SSC 4137, x84937, bmorris2@uwo.ca  
Office hours: By appointment, on Zoom

Course Description:  
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.

Course Format:  
This course will operate “synchronously,” which means that we will gather together on Zoom on a weekly basis at the time established by the registrar, Thursdays 1:30-3:30. Please make a point of showing up a few minutes ahead of time so we can get underway immediately. The seminar will work best if students are well prepared and armed with questions, concerns, and insights to share.

Requirements and Evaluation:  

(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 to the OWL Drop Box before the week’s seminar begins. You must submit at least one reading commentary paper by the end of October. *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 take home exam. *Grade: 20%.*

(d) **Take Home Exam:** you will produce a coherent set of answers to a series of questions made available at the end of the term. This will provide you with an opportunity to review our work from the term, while incorporating a small additional research component (one book chapter or journal article for MA students, two for PhD students). The exam will be 14-16 pages in length for MA students, 20-22 pages for Doctoral students. *Grade: 40%.*

**COURSE READINGS:**

**Introduction (September 10)**

No assigned readings.

**Week One**  
**Comparative Theory and Method (September 17)**


*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).


### Week Two

**Development and Democratization (September 24)**


**Recommended:**


Week Three
Dependency and the Developmental State (October 1)


**Recommended:**

Week Four
The State, War, and Regime Change (October 8)


**Recommended:**


**Week Five**

**Institutionalism and Implications (October 15)**


**Recommended:**


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


**Week Six**

**Transitology and the Historical Turn in Democratization Studies (October 22)**


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:*  
Week Seven
Parties, Party Systems and Electoral Systems (October 29)


Recommended:
Russell Dalton and Martin Wattenberg, eds. Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrialized Societies (Oxford University Press, 2004), chapters 2 and 3.
Alan Renwick, “Electoral Reform in Europe since 1945.” *West European Politics* vol. 34, no. 3 (May 2011).


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).


**Week Eight**

**Systems of Government (November 12)**


**Recommended:**


**Week Nine**

**Contentious Politics: Revolutions, Ethnic Conflict, and Civil Wars (November 19)**

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.

**Week Ten**

**Culture and Politics (November 26)**


**Recommended:**


**Week Eleven**

**Comparative Political Economy (December 10)**


**Recommended:**


