COMPARATIVE POLITICS FIELD SEMINAR

PSC 350/550
Fall 2011
Tuesday 12:30-15:15 (Harkness 329)

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OVERVIEW

PSC 350/550 is the required field seminar for the comparative politics field of the Ph.D. program. Comparative politics seeks to develop and test theories that can be used to explain political events and patterns across political systems, largely, but not exclusively, nation-states. In American political science this has largely come to mean description and explanation of politics in countries outside the United States. This course is designed to introduce students to classic and contemporary works across a range of subfields of comparative politics, including: democracy, dictatorship, and development, revolutions and violence, culture and social movements, parties and electoral systems, representation and accountability, institutions of governance, and political economy. It will also introduce various methodological approaches and issues in the comparative field, including research design and case selection. Undergraduates will be permitted to enroll only with consent of the instructors.

REQUIREMENTS

This class is a discussion seminar, not a lecture course. It is essential that students be prepared to discuss ALL of the readings each and every class. Many of the works that we will read are a blend of theory, methods, and substantive empirical analysis, which are aimed at uncovering systematic patterns or solving puzzles. Class participants should thus be prepared to describe and compare the week’s required readings from two points of view:

(1) What are the principal substantive arguments being made? What phenomena are the targets of explanation? Are they clearly identified and defined? Are they defined at the level of individuals, groups, institutions, states, or other sorts of entities? What variables are proposed to explain them? At what level are these variables? What causal mechanisms are proposed as linkages?

(2) What methodological approach is taken to enhance the credibility of those arguments and how well does it succeed? What kinds of empirical implications of the theory are examined? For example, over-time changes or corresponding cross-national levels of variables at a single point in time? Evidence of behavioral connections? How are the important variables measured--quantitative/qualitative approaches? What care is taken to specify relationships between multiple variables? How are cases selected?

Student responsibilities include leading discussion of one of the readings in each seminar,
drawing the class into describing and comparing the readings substantively and methodologically. (There will be some flexibility about this depending on the size of the class and the readings for the week.) A one-two page handout of notes should be provided. Grades will be based on these presentations and general class discussion (33%); the take-home “midterm,” (33%); and a take-home “final” (33%), covering the 2nd half of the course.

REQUIRED READINGS

You may want to purchase the books marked with a *; if you do not already have them. They are all paperbacks. As many of these are somewhat older works, you may well be able to get them less expensively through half.com or Amazon or other internet sites. Most articles are available through the Voyager electronic journals. Other works will be available on-line through course reserves or in a box in the Political Science Lounge, Harkness 314. Please be sure to return these quickly, so that others can read them

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

September 6. Organizational Meeting.

Syllabus.

September 13  Democracy, Dictatorship and Development I

Lipset, Seymour Martin. *APS*, March, 1959 or *Political Man*, Doubleday 1960, Ch.2.

September 20  Development, Dictatorship and Democratization II


September 27  The State, Conflict, and Order

Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions*. 1979, at least 3-42, 161-171.
October 4  Violence and Ethnicity


October 11  Culture and Social Movements

*Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, 1993. (Skip Ch. 2.)
Tarrow, Sidney. *Power in Movement*, Cambridge 1994, Ch. 1,2,7,9

October 18  MIDTERM  A take-home midterm will be arranged for this week.

October 25  Case Selection and Comparative Politics


November 1  Parties, Elections and Election Rules

Boix, Carles. “Setting the Rules…” *APSR*, Sept 1999

November 8  Voters, Citizens and Clients

November 15 **Institutions**

Ostrom, Eleanor. Governing the Commons. Cambridge 1990. Ch. 1, 3 (skim ch. 2).


November 22 **THANKSGIVING WEEK - NO CLASS**

November 29 **Representation and Accountability**


*Riker, Liberalism Against Populism*, 1982, Ch. 1,5, 8, 10.

December 6 **Political Economy I: Developed World**


Rogowski, Ronald. *Commerce & Coalitions*, 1989, Ch.1 (or 1987 *APSR* article)

December 13 **Political Economy II: Developing World**


(Recommended” Humphreys and Weinstein, “Field Experiments and the Political Economy Of Development,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2009.)

TAKE-HOME “FINAL” covering 2nd half of course. (Details to be negotiated)