

Introduction to Comparative Politics

POLS V1501 Fall 2007
TR 10:35-11:50am
202 Altschul Hall

Mona El-Ghobashy
418-A Lehman Hall
Office hours: W 12-2pm
melghobashy@barnard.edu

Teaching Assistants

Seva Gunitskiy, vg2122@columbia.edu
Virginia Oliveros, vo2110@columbia.edu
Allan Roth, apr2105@columbia.edu

Introduction

Comparative politics is premised on the idea that you *can* compare apples and oranges. Comparing both entire political systems and specific units within political systems helps us understand what we are looking at in each one. For example, to understand the causes of a specific revolution, it is necessary to compare it to others and even to instances where revolution did not occur, so that we can isolate the factors that precipitated revolution in one place and time but not others.

The course is structured in two parts. Part I reviews some foundational *topics* in comparative politics, such as state formation, nationalism, democratization, and revolution. Part II focuses on some major *puzzles* in the sub-field, such as: Why are some countries resource-rich but very poor while others are resource-poor but very rich? How do different democracies work? What determines voter behavior? What causes corruption? What causes civil wars?

The course has three goals: (1) to guide you to analyze and compare complex political processes through frequent reading and discussion, (2) to teach you to write clear, well-argued expository essays, and (3) to serve as an introduction to and foundation for advanced undergraduate study in political science and related social sciences. Like the other 1000-level introductory surveys, this course is a prerequisite for several 3000- and 4000-level lectures, colloquia, and seminars.

Requirements

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| ❖ Lecture and discussion section participation | 20% |
| ❖ Three in-class quizzes | 15% |
| ❖ 5-page research design | 35% |
| ❖ Final exam | 30% |

Attendance is mandatory in both lectures and discussion sections (attendance will be taken in the latter). More than two unexcused section absences will hurt your section attendance grade. At every lecture, I distribute important handouts and make announcements. Please be on time every time; class starts promptly at 10:35 am and ends promptly at 11:50 pm.

Each of the writing assignments develops a specific skill set. The *in-class quizzes* help you keep up with the readings and train you to identify authors' arguments. The dates of the quizzes are indicated on the course schedule below.

The *Research Design* trains you to think like a comparativist by designing a research proposal on any topic of interest to you. The only requirement for the research design is that you make use of comparison in some way. You may compare two events, processes, groups, or institutions in one country or across two countries, or compare across time. You may even propose to compare two neighborhoods in a single city. While the scale of the comparison is up to you, a strong research design must be anchored in a very specific and focused *question*, a puzzle that genuinely interests you. You should construct a cogent answer to the question (your argument), discuss alternative answers to the same question (competing arguments), and develop a clear and feasible research strategy for how you would bolster your argument.

Constructing a research design is not a one-shot exercise, but a multi-step process of rethinking and revision. Therefore, you will have the opportunity to receive feedback on a first draft so that your final submission is lucid and precise. See the course schedule below for submission dates and requirements.

For the *in-class final exam*, you will be asked to define major concepts and write one essay from a list of three questions distributed at least one week in advance. The final exam is cumulative.

Required Texts

The following textbook has been ordered at **Labyrinth Books** (112th St. btw. Broadway and Amsterdam, 212-865-1588) and also placed on reserve at Butler library. All other course readings are available online via the Reserves link on the class Courseworks page.

- ❖ Michael J. Sodaro, *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*, 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill 2007).

Policy on Late Assignments, Missed Quizzes, etc.

- ❖ There are no make-up quizzes, if you miss a quiz, you forfeit 5% of your course grade. There are only two conditions under which a make-up will be administered: family emergency or serious illness (doctor's note required). Any other circumstances do not count (work commitments, routine illnesses, schedule conflicts, etc.)

- ❖ Late research designs will be downgraded a third of a letter grade per day, including weekends. For example, a “B” assignment due Tuesday but handed in Thursday will receive a “C+”. Assignments submitted more than **four** days after the due date will not be accepted.
- ❖ There are no make-up final exams. The date of the final exam is determined by the College Registrar.

No grade of “Incomplete” will be assigned in this course, so please manage your schedule to hand in all coursework on time.

Academic Honesty

All students taking this course must adhere to the Barnard College honor code, regardless of their academic affiliation. The honor code considers it “dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any papers or books not authorized by the instructor in examinations, or to present oral work or written work which is not entirely our own, unless otherwise approved by the instructor.” If in doubt about any of these provisions or you would like to discuss these matters further, please seek help from your section leaders and the instructor.

Classroom Etiquette

- ❖ Our class is a professional environment conducive to active learning, and any distractions will undermine this purpose. So as a matter of respect for your peers, your section leaders, and your instructor, please be in your seats by 10:35 am, and I in turn will always end class promptly at 11:50 am.
- ❖ If work circumstances require you to arrive 10 minutes late or leave early once or twice a semester, please do so unobtrusively and without disruption to other members of the class.
- ❖ All cell phones and beepers must be turned off for the full duration of the class period. Students whose phones ring during lecture will be asked to leave.
- ❖ Please do not bring your breakfast to class. Water and beverages in sealed containers are fine; noisy, aromatic foods are not allowed.

Course Schedule

September 4: Introduction, Overview of Syllabus and Course Requirements

September 6: Comparative Politics: What is it?

- ❖ Sodaro, ch. 1

September 11: Comparative Politics: Content and Concepts

- ❖ Sodaro, chs. 2 & 4.

September 13: Comparative Politics: Methods

- ❖ Sodaro, ch. 3.

Part I. The Big Issues in Comparative Politics

September 18-20

State Formation

- ❖ Sodaro, ch. 5.
- ❖ Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter Evans et al, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-91.
- ❖ Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), ch. 3.

First in-class Quiz on September 18 on Tilly reading

September 25-27

Nationalism

- ❖ Sodaro, ch. 6.
- ❖ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), ch. 3.
- ❖ Eric Hobsbawm, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 7.

October 2-4

Democratization

- ❖ Sodaro, chs. 7&9.
- ❖ Larry Diamond, “Defining and Developing Democracy,” in Robert Dahl et al, eds., *The Democracy Sourcebook* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 29-39.
- ❖ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), ch. 1.
- ❖ Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 7.2 (1996).

October 9-11

Revolution

**Registrar’s Note: October 9 is the last day to drop a class*

- ❖ Theda Skocpol, “France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (April 1976): 175-203.
- ❖ Farideh Farhi, “State Disintegration and Urban-Based Revolutionary Crisis: A Comparative Analysis of Iran and Nicaragua,” *Comparative Political Studies* 21:2 (1988): 231-256.
- ❖ Timur Kuran, “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* 44:1 (October 1991): 7-48.

Second in-class Quiz on October 9 on Skocpol reading

Part II. Puzzles for Comparativists

October 16-18

What are “Hybrid Regimes”?

- ❖ Larry Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy* (April 2002): 21-35.
- ❖ Steven Levitsky, “Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism” *Journal of Democracy* (April 2002): 51-65.
- ❖ Edward Gibson, “Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries,” *World Politics* (October 2005): 101-32.

October 23-25

Why Do Democracies Look Different?

- ❖ Sodaro, ch. 8.
- ❖ Sodaro, chs. 16, 17, 18 (Britain, France, Germany)

October 30-November 1

Why are Some Countries Resource-rich but Poor while Others are Resource-poor but Rich?

- ❖ World Bank, “Natural Resources: When Blessings Become Curses,” n.d.
- ❖ Terry Lynn Karl, “Understanding the Resource Curse,” in Tsalik and Schiffrin, eds., *Covering Oil* (New York: Open Society Institute, 2005), 21-30.
- ❖ Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, “Prelude to the Resource Curse: Explaining Oil and Gas Development Strategies in the Soviet Successor States and Beyond,” *Comparative Political Studies* 34:4 (2001): 367-99.

First Draft of Research Design due in class October 30

November 6

Election Day Holiday

November 8

Why are Some States ‘Predatory’ and Others ‘Developmental’?

- ❖ Robert Bates, *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development* (New York: W.W. Norton 2001), chs. 3-4.
- ❖ Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), ch. 3.
- ❖ Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *American Political Science Review* 87:3 (September 1993): 567-576.

November 13-15 **Why do Citizens Vote?**

**Registrar's Note: November 15 is last day to pass/fail*

- ❖ Sodaro, pp. 270-274.
- ❖ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957), selections.
- ❖ Thomas Lancaster and Michael Lewis-Beck, "The Spanish Voter: Tradition, Economics, Ideology," *The Journal of Politics* (August 1986): 648-674.
- ❖ Alexander Schuessler, "Expressive Voting," *Rationality and Society* 12:1 (2000): 87-119.

Third in-class Quiz on November 13 on Lancaster & Lewis-Beck and Schuessler

November 20 **What Explains Civil Wars?**

- ❖ Charles Tilly, "Violence, Terror, and Politics as Usual," *Boston Review* (Summer 2002).
- ❖ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 2nd ed. (Polity 2006), selections.
- ❖ Stathis Kalyvas, "New' and 'Old' Civil Wars. A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics* 54 (2001): 99-118.

November 22 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

November 27-29 **Civil Wars (cont'd).**

Guest Lecture: Professor Severine Autesserre, Department of Political Science, Barnard College

- ❖ Stathis Kalyvas, "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria," *Rationality and Society* 11:3 (1999): 243-285.
- ❖ Michael Ross, "Oil, Drugs, and Diamonds: the Varying Roles of Natural Resources in Civil War," in Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 47-72.
- ❖ Rui J. P. de Figueiredo, Jr. and Barry R. Weingast, "The Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," in Barbara Walter and Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 261-302.

Research Design due in class on November 27

December 4-6

What Causes Political Corruption?

- ❖ Andrei Schleifer and Robert Vishny, "Corruption," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (August 1993): 599-617.
- ❖ Diego Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), selections.
- ❖ Federico Varese, *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), chs. 1-2.

Final Exam on Tuesday December 18, 9 am-12 noon

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