

PS 641: Proseminar in Comparative Politics

I. Introduction & Logistics

A. Introduce selves, contact info, office hours (by appt)

1. Allen Hicken (ahicken@umich.edu)
2. Rob Franzese (franzese@umich.edu)

B. Overview of today

1. Course description, syllabus, logistics
2. Brief intellectual history of (sub)field
3. Intro comparative methods (and debates therein)
4. Key concepts & vocabulary

II. Course description

A. Reading (tons) & discussion (lots)

1. Study grps, outlines, skim, read strategically, abstracts
2. Participate, expect to be called, no exceptions

B. Writing: 3 “literature reviews with a slant”

1. Recognize & distill arguments
 - a) Dependent & independent variable
 - b) Argument
 - c) Nature, structure, & key aspects of evidence
 - d) Gist of conclusion & implications
2. Add something(s)
 - a) Argument: Synthesis, extension, critique, etc.
 - b) Evidence: New cases (space, time), implications, methods, etc.

III. Brief Intellectual History of (Sub)Field

- #### A. By Approach, in 2x2 Tables (work-horse of PolSci, from Jan-Erik Lane & Svante Ersson. *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, Ch. 1,

pp. 15-51. [See also first few sections of Rob's notes for PS460, available from his web page, address above.]

B. By question (topic), method, and core arguments (handout from Jennifer Widner's PS641 notes)

IV. Intro to comparative method(s) and debates therein

A. Max Weber, *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Chs. 1-2.

B. Arend Lijphart. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* (Sep 1971) 682-93.

C. James Fearon. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* (1991) 43:169-195.

D. The PPE Approach

1. William Riker. "Political Science and Rational Choice," in J. Alt & K. Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, 1990, pp. 163-82.

2. Robert Bates. "Macropolitical Economy in the Field of Development," in J. Alt & K. Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, 1990, pp. 31-55.

3. Peter Ordeshook, "The Emerging Discipline of Political Economy," in J. Alt & K. Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, 1990, pp. 9-30.

E. Historical Institutionalism, an alternative? Kathleen Thelen & Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in Sven Steinmo, et. al., eds. *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*.

F. Gary King, Robert Keohane, & Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*.

1. "Review Symposium: Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation," *American Political Science Review* (June 1995) 454-82.

2. Robert Bates. "Area Studies & the Discipline: Useful Controversy?" *PS: Political Science and Politics*, June 1997, pp. 166-169.

V. Key Concepts & Vocabulary

A. Dependent & Independent Variables

B. *Conceptualization, Operationalization, Measurement, Specification*

C. Assumptions, theories, and models

D. DEFINITIONS

1. Contents

2. Micro-foundations

3. Generality (Scope): no proper nouns!

4. Power (Accuracy)

5. Parsimony

6. *Fertility* (Widner's term), *Consilience* (Olson's term)

7. Empirical evaluability (Rob's term), falsifiability (common term)

E. Hypotheses, Observable Implications

F. Selection bias, endogeneity, & causal mis-specification

G. Omitted-variable bias, over-determination, degrees of freedom

H. Validity & reliability; replicability