Political Science 641: Proseminar in Comparative Politics
Fall 2002, Monday 08:00-10:00, Lorch 171
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Class Schedule
1. (9 Sep) Introduction, Administration & Logistics
2. (16 Sep) States
3. (23 Sep) Political Development, Democratization and Regime Type
4. (30 Sep) Violence, Rebellion, and Revolution
5. (7 Oct) Political Culture and Political Attitudes
6. (21 Oct) Introduction to Institutions
7. (28 Oct) Political Participation and Collective Action
8. (4 Nov) Cleavage Structure, Interest Groups and Interest Intermediation
9. (11 Nov) Elections and Electoral Systems
10. (18 Nov) Political Parties and Party Systems
11. (25 Nov) Constitutions
12. (2 Dec) Policymaking
13: (9 Dec) States, Markets, and Prosperity

Overview:
This seminar surveys major topics in comparative politics for Ph.D. students, addressing topics of special importance in the sub-field, although far from exhaustively. Each week participants discuss a subset of the pertinent scholarly literature, often focusing on a major theoretical controversy. We address key methodological issues in the context of these substantive and theoretical works.

The course is a boot camp for the comparative sub-field. The reading load is unavoidably very heavy because we must entertain multiple hypotheses and research designs. Be forewarned, read the suggestions at the end of the syllabus carefully, and pay close attention to the guidance for each coming week we offer at the end of the previous. We also extremely highly recommend that you form reading groups and provide summary outlines to each other before the week’s meeting.

Note that participants are responsible only for the required readings. We provide the list of articles by Michigan authors and the additional sources for those who want to pursue some of the topics in later work and need guidelines. The Michigan authors section is incomplete, but it does acquaint you generally with what faculty members in the field have written.

There are two main requirements. 1) Because this is a discussion course, active participation is essential. We expect each person to have read assigned selections every week for discussion and to be ready to contribute to the conversation. 2) We also expect each student to prepare three discussion papers, detailed in the accompanying memo. In calculating grades, participation weighs 25% and papers 75%. Students may elect to have later papers weighted more heavily than the first paper; practice may help.

Classic texts or books from which we assign long passages are on order at the Michigan bookstores. The graduate library has on reserve all assigned readings, including those on order at the bookstores (i.e., you need not buy the books). Articles and shorter selections from books are available from electronic reserves; you may create your own hardcopies from there if you like.

We hold office hours for graduate students by appointment; contact information appears above.
1. (9 Sep) Administrative Introduction: Logistics, etc.

**Intellectual History & Methods of & Debates in Comparative Politics**

The first substantive class introduces the enterprise of comparative politics and the intellectual history of the field. Although we view the best way to learn as reading and arguing about the classics, we offer this set of preliminary background readings to set the stage. Methodological maxims and arguments about alternative approaches to the study of political science will enter our weekly discussions during the term. The department’s methodological courses, e.g., *Research Design and Method in Comparative Politics, Survey Research Design, Qualitative Research Methods*, or any of the various statistical-analysis courses (*PS 599, 699, 787, etc.*), address methods and approaches more explicitly and extensively.

- Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson. *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, 3rd ed. London: Sage, 1994. Chapter 1, pp. 15-51. [Perhaps not the best-written, but offers a relatively complete and simple overview of the intellectual history. See also the first few sections of Rob’s notes for PS441, available from his web page, address above.]
- Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” from Sven Steinmo, et. al., eds. *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*.

Some Additional Sources:
- Jan Elster, *Nuts and Bolts*


2. *(16 Sep) States*


Michiganders on states and nations


Some additional sources on States


Spring and Summer 1995 issues of Daedalus focus on states and state disintegration in the late 20th century.


David Held. Global Transformations.

Additional Sources on Nation-Building


3. (23 Sep) Theories of Political Development, Transition, & Regime Type

Modernization and Dependency Theories


Regime Type/Democratization


Michiganders:


Some additional sources:

Authoritarian Regimes

Juan Linz, “Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes,” in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., Handbook of
Political Science, 3 (1975): 191-357.


- Giuseppe di Palma. To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions, 1990, chapter 1 and enough more to appreciate the argument.
- Two sets of edited volumes have attracted considerable attention, one a series by Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (the “Transitions” series) and the other by Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (the “Democracy” series).

Democratic Consolidation and Stability


More Modernization/Political Development


Dependency Theories/Theories of Underdevelopment

4. (30 Sep) Violence, Rebellion, and Revolution


Additional Sources:
5. *(7 Oct)* Political Culture and Political Attitudes

**Two classics**

**Studying Culture**

**Three alternative approaches** (read at least two)
- Susan Pharr, *Losing Face* (Berkeley: University of California Press), excerpts in packet
- Samuel Huntington, *American Politics and the Promise of Disharmony*, excerpts in packet

**Commentary**

**Michiganders**

**Some additional Sources:**

6. (21 Oct) Introduction to Institutions


7. (28 Oct) Participation and Collective Action


Additional Sources

Participation

Culture and Protest

Social Movements/Political Resources and Participation

*Hidden Forms of Resistance*

8. (*4 Nov*) **Cleavage Structure, Interest Groups, and Interest Intermediation**


**Michiganders:**

**Some Additional Sources**
9. (II Nov) Elections and Electoral Systems


Some additional sources:


10. (18 Nov) Parties and Party Systems

- Gallagher, Laver, Mair, Representative Government in Modern Europe: Institutions, Parties, and Governments, 3rd


Michiganders

Some additional Sources
- Mattei Dogan and Richard Rose, eds. *European Politics: A Reader*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971 (various chapters on parties)


Background:
Modern:

Classic
- Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America. author’s introduction, vol. 1 part 1 chapters 5-6 and last 3 sections of 8; vol. 1 part 2 chapter 6 sections 3-4; vol. 2 part 2 chapters 1-13; vol. 2 part 3 chapters 1-4, 13-14, 19.*

Some Additional Sources:
- Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, Making and Breaking Governments (on Parliamentary government formation and dissolution)

12. (2 Dec) Policymaking: Approaches


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Some additional Sources:


Macroeconomic policy in democracies


The welfare state


13. (9 Dec) States, Markets, and Prosperity

- Alexander Gerschenkron, “Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective,” in Alexander Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective
- Chalmers Johnson. From MITI and the Japanese Miracle. Short excerpt.

Michiganders


Some additional sources


Dependency Theorists (Underdevelopment Theorists)

- Fernando Henrique Cardozo and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America, University of California Press, 1979, pp. viii-xxv, 177-216.


**Neo-Classical and New Institutionalist Approaches**


**The East Asia Debate**


**IPE Approaches**


• Paul Krugman. *Geography and Trade.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991 (an economist to whom political scientists should listen; there is a subsequent book on geography, trade, and development)

**More about the Proseminar in Comparative Politics**

The close predecessor to this syllabus emerged from Jennifer Widner’s review of related courses at comparable universities; it also reflects some important updates she added and her own thinking about what “basic training” in Comparative Politics entails. The current instructors have modified it further, with still more updates and their largely concurring but not identical views on the core of Comparative Politics. The main objective remains to introduce key questions and classics. The focus remains on the theoretical and empirical “canon” rather than the most current articles and definitely not just some global survey of political facts.

**Reading**

The reading load for this course is necessarily heavy. In order to provide an introduction to the range of approaches offered to important topics, and to permit interesting comparisons and contrasts, the requirements include excerpts from many works. Indeed, the reading will almost certainly prove overwhelming at times. We have some suggestions about how to deal with this fact of (for now) graduate training (but you will soon discover, it only gets worse from here).

First: *Skimming* is an important professional skill. (Two corollaries: (1) well-written abstracts are extremely useful; treasure them! (2) never write another paper or book-chapter without an abstract, preferably a good one!)

Second: Read and skim purposively or strategically, to identify the following:
• The main question the author wants to answer
• The definition of the “dependent variable,” or what the author wants to explain
• The main “independent variables” (causes, explanatory factors) the author emphasizes
• The “story” that knits the independent variables together into a causal explanation
• The author’s research design: the main types of evidence the author uses to test his or her ideas and the way the evidence was obtained
• The theoretical and/or empirical “conclusion”

Note that this is a “thinking” course, not a “fact” course. That also tends to describe the field. You don’t have to memorize the histories or empirical details in what you read here, and you will find that the profession likewise, and correctly, rewards theoretically and empirically exciting projects (i.e., ideas, arguments, and evidence) much more than empirical-historical detail per se.

Third: You will NOT be able to keep pace alone, even while reading and skimming strategically (another fact of the profession rather than artifact of the course), so you should (i) prioritize among the assigned readings very carefully, given your interests and needs, and with our guidance, and (ii) form (a) weekly study group(s) to outline and discuss the readings with and for each other.

How to Write Papers for This Course

At each session you will receive a handout profiling some of the key issues that arise in the next week’s reading. You may use these as guides for writing papers. A paper may focus on a general question or cluster of questions from the handout or on a question of your own devising.

The papers should be “literature reviews with a spin.” That is, they present a sketch of the major theories (explanations) and the results of your own assessment, focused on a sub-question. In some weeks they may focus on research design. You will use the “lit review with a spin” genre extensively throughout your social-scientific career. It may not sound so interesting or challenging at first, but they are more rewarding and less easy than you think. Some of the best examples appear in World Politics or, more recently, Annual Reviews, but the description also characterizes core sections of the introduction chapter of most good books. You may want to look at some of the review essays there as well as sample past essays we will make available.

For your papers in this course, you should first distill the theory, method, and conclusion in each selection, commenting as appropriate on the research design and evidence. In these tasks, you want to delineate clearly the independent and dependent variables (causes and effects) and consider critically their conceptualization and operationalization. Are the concepts clear? What is the theory, argument, or story that links the variables? If the author tries to test the theory, what does s/he do? In your view, was the choice of design acceptable, or could you recommend a better way to test the theory? Were the measures well chosen to reflect and calibrate concepts?

Recall that this is a literature review with a spin, however. You must do more than array two or more selections from the week and assess their relative adequacy; you must do more even than offer and justify such an assessment. You must offer some kind of synthesis and/or extension; i.e., you must offer some argument(s) of your own. These could be alternative arguments—this literature or these works have the relationships between independent and dependent variables wrong because [insert your argument here... ]—but they need not be; they could be syntheses—this or these selections argue X while that or those argue Z, [insert your argument here] shows how both are subsumed by a more-general argument, or [insert your argument here] shows how one actually gets relationships Z when the arguments are combined; they could also be extensions—A (and B) argue Z, but if one follows that argument further conclusions follow [insert your argument(s) here]. In this “critical review with extension” endeavor, gut reactions [A can’t be right!] often provide good leads, but you must translate them into real reasons [arguments]. Mature scholarship often asks not whether some argument is right or wrong but under what kinds of circumstances a theory is useful. Comparative politics largely seeks to understand just such context-conditionality!

As with your reading, do not dwell on empirical details in your papers. Papers should not be
discussions of “who got the history right.” Specialized courses and cognate courses in other disciplines are the better forum for mastering “the data.”

Aim for a clear, concise, professional tone. Too casual or light-hearted style is not well-accepted in the field. Although the occasional clever comment is OK, generally casualness doesn’t work. Better to show that you can clarify an argument, even if the original author left it murky!

Writing quality counts! Clear, careful writing is vital professional skill. It is essential for effective communication, and it reduces the time and effort a reader must spend to “get your message.” You should check syntax, grammar, word choice, spelling, and neatness in your papers. If your English skills are insufficient, we will expect, at minimum, strong progress on that dimension over the semester. The Sweetland Writing Center can and will help; use it if you need it. (If you need it, you will know as you write and we will know as we read your papers, so you can expect some guidance from the course and from us on your needs.) This program aims to train world-class political scientists; from everything our foreign-language-speaking colleagues in the profession tell us, that implies preferably world-class but minimally proficient writers in the English language.

You may pick the weeks to do your papers, subject to the constraint that at least one is due by the end of the first 5 weeks, and then at least one more by then end of each of following 4-week periods. That is, minimum one paper by Week 5, minimum two papers by Week 9, and all three by Week 13. You have control over which papers you choose to write, and that flexibility should be sufficient to alleviate scheduling burdens, but you can seek waiver of the policy if you have a “good” reason, cleared with us at least one week in advance of a deadline.

The Course and Preparation for the Field Examination

Those who cover this material well (effective, strategic reading, participate in study group and class) will find the course useful preparation for comprehensive or general examinations. The prelim exam reading list builds on the 641 syllabus.

Grading

Papers count 25% each; participation counts 25%. Participation is mandatory and may not be avoided on personal (e.g., shyness), social, topical, or any other grounds. Fair warning: we will call on you if you are having difficulty participating on your own, so much better to choose your own opportunities.

We will try to return papers, with comments, within a week, but administrative and other emergencies occasionally obstruct that goal. We grant you full rights to begin to gripe and to pester—in fact we encourage you to do so—after 10 days. Students often find that they do less well on the first paper than they anticipate; note that this does not preclude an A grade in the course. We do allow for qualitative adjustments to grades based on improvement, but note that this does require improvement (i.e., reading and profiting from the comments on earlier drafts).