Field Seminar in Comparative Politics
Boston University
Political Science 751
Spring 2017

Last revised: January 18, 2017

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Office hours: Wednesday 3-4:30, Thursday 3:15-4:45

Class location: 232 Bay State Rd., 312B (political science seminar room)
Class time: Thursday 12:30-3:15

Course Description

This course is an introduction to comparative politics for graduate students. It provides an overview of the major theoretical approaches and areas of research in the subfield, covering both classic works and more recent contributions. Topics include the origins of states, nations, and political regimes such as democracy and authoritarianism; the role of political institutions, including electoral systems, party systems, and systems of government; and political economy issues such as development, business politics, and the welfare state. In each area, the focus is on comparing distinct theoretical approaches and/or countries and regions that present empirical contrasts. We examine works that employ a variety of methodological tools, including case studies, statistical analysis, and formal modeling or game theory. For Ph.D. students in political science, this course should form the core of your preparation for the qualifying exam in comparative politics.

In a seminar such as this one, you are expected to do all of the required readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss them. Towards that end, you should take notes as you read and come prepared with questions, arguments, and points to raise. Depending on your learning style, you may want to coordinate with other students to divide up responsibility for preparing summaries or outlines of the readings and to study for the final exam. Summaries or outlines, along with your own notes, can be an invaluable resource when it comes time to study for the Ph.D. qualifying exam. That said, group study and summaries or outlines should not substitute for carefully reading the material on your own.

Requirements

There are three requirements for the course: active participation in class discussion (10% of the grade), a final exam (40%), and a term paper (50%). The final exam is intended to mimic the format of the Ph.D. qualifying exam, albeit shorter overall. It will be a closed-book, closed-note exam consisting of several essay questions that you will answer using a laptop computer (if you
don’t have your own, please let me know so I can arrange for a loaner). Each essay question will cover one or more big themes in the course and will require you to demonstrate broad knowledge of the literature.

The term paper consists of a 25–30 page paper which is due at the end of the semester. The major objective of the term paper is to give Ph.D. students a base to build upon, via subsequent revision, for the second-year paper requirement or for a dissertation prospectus. The paper can be on any topic in comparative politics, regardless of whether it is covered in the course, but it should involve substantial outside research; no more than one-third of the sources should be drawn from this syllabus. The paper can compare multiple countries/regions or examine one in a broader comparative context. If relevant, you are encouraged to draw upon outside data sources, such as electoral results, economic development indicators, or quantitative measures of democracy. I am open to students building upon prior research, such as an undergraduate honors thesis or M.A. thesis, as long as your paper for this course is clearly distinct from something you have written before. All students are required to meet with me during office hours prior to Spring Break—the earlier, the better—in order to discuss potential paper topics. Start early and consult with me when you have questions; this will make for a better paper.

Readings

For each week of the course, there is approximately 300 pages of reading assigned (the number of pages for each week/reading is listed below). Much of this drawn from books. Where a relatively small portion of a book is assigned, the material will be scanned and made available online. Most of these will be via the Mugar Library e-reserves, indicated by a boldface R after the entry. To access these readings, visit http://buprimo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=BU&lang=en_US and search for ‘po751’ in course reserves. Other readings will be scanned and available on the course Blackboard site at http://learn.bu.edu; these are indicated with a B. Some books are available online in their entirety through the library; these are indicated with an O. Journal articles are also available online, typically via JSTOR. Please let me know ASAP if you have any difficulty obtaining online readings.

Books that will not be available online are listed below. You should either purchase these books or obtain them from the library. I have placed the library copies on reserve, so they can only be borrowed for 24 hours; please be considerate of your fellow students and check them out only as long as it takes to scan or photocopy the material you intend to read. I have not ordered any books for purchase at the BU Barnes & Noble, but all the books listed below are in print and available through online sellers like Amazon.com; there are also plenty of used copies available online.

You might also want to purchase other books listed on the syllabus, even if the required reading is available online—e.g., because you are interested in the topic and want to read other chapters on your own (possibly for the term paper).
Required Books


The following books are recommended for purchase. We will be reading substantial portions of them, and while the assigned pages are available online, you might prefer to own a physical copy. O’Donnell (1973) and Duverger (1954) are out of print, but used copies are available; the others are available new.

**Recommended Books**


**Schedule**

NOTE: the number of pages for each reading, and the total for the week, are listed in parentheses. B = Blackboard, R = Mugar Library e-Reserves; O = online in its entirety via the library catalog.

**Week 1 (1/19). Introduction (~192)**


**Week 2 (1/26). Approaches to Comparative Politics (283)**


Week 3 (2/2). Origins of States and Nations (308)


Week 4 (2/9). Democracy and Democratization (299)


**Week 5 (2/16). Authoritarianism (325)**


**Week 6 (2/23). Revolution, Violence, and Contentious Politics (324)**


**Week 7 (3/2). Culture and Identity (330)**


**Week 8 (3/16). Electoral Systems (287)**


*Week 10 (3/30). Systems of Government (351)*


**Week 11 (4/6). Development (305)**


**Week 12 (4/13). Industrial Organization and Business Politics (326)**


Week 13 (4/20): No class (professor giving a talk at Harvard)

Work on your papers! And come to my talk if you feel so inspired… http://drclas.harvard.edu/events/brazil-studies-program-taylor-boas


May 3: Final papers due (email to professor)

May 9: Final exam, 2-5 p.m., normal classroom