**Course overview**
This class offers a critical introduction to the field of comparative politics. Comparative politics is commonly described as the study of the domestic politics of different states. In this class, we will focus less on the “what” (the dimensions of various polities) than on the “how” and “why”: methodological approaches and tools, theoretical advances and assumptions, and core substantive foci. The course offers not only an intellectual history and map, but also an entrée into key debates and the trade-offs among different approaches (rational, cultural, and structural; quantitative, qualitative, and interpretive; small-N and large-N) and an overview of a range of substantive areas in comparative politics (states, regimes, institutions, collective action, nationalism, political economy, and globalization). Overall, the course is designed both to provide a broad survey, including at least a glimpse into many of the field’s canonical texts (either directly or by way of synoptic works assessing those texts), and to give you the tools you will need to embark on further studies and original research. The emphasis in this course is less on cutting-edge applications of theoretical frameworks or applied analyses of novel data than on laying foundations: we will emphasize the sorts of foundational works that subsequent studies—likely including your own future endeavors—test and engage.

**Objectives**
By the end of the course, you will be able to:
- Summarize and compare the key conceptual frameworks used in comparative politics.
- Discuss and critique the major questions and theories on which comparative politics focuses.
- Outline the key debates within core areas of comparative political inquiry.
- Synthesize across cases and approaches in canonical works of comparative politics.
- Demonstrate ability to craft a research prospectus.

**Requirements and evaluation criteria**
**Participation (40%)** The class will be run as a discussion-driven seminar. It is vitally important that every student **participate actively and thoughtfully** each week. Participation will be evaluated based on whether you voluntarily pose and respond to questions in each class session, demonstrate that you have completed the assigned reading, and listen respectfully to
what your peers say. The reading load is heavy (about 200 pages per week) and diverse, but you should come to class having thought through both the arguments and approaches presented, and the significance of and connections among the assigned texts. Do not just read selected pieces from among the assigned works; read all, jotting down notes or questions as you read, even if you focus more intently on some texts than others.

As part of the participation requirement, each week, at least one student will prepare a 3-4 page critical summary of the week’s readings for distribution to the class (which will be useful for you to have for later reference) and lead class discussion for that day. These summaries should go beyond synopsizing individual pieces, to synthesize and critique the readings: identify major themes, highlight points of (dis)agreement, link the readings with what has come before in the class, and tease out methodological or intellectual trends. Particularly since each critical summary will cover several assigned texts, these summaries should not include more than a capsule summary of any given work. Rather, while having a collaboratively-produced set of succinct, integrated summaries will be helpful particularly for those taking the comparative politics field exam, my assessment will home in on your effort at integration and analysis.

Depending on enrollment, each student will complete one or two of these summaries. Keep in mind, too, that what is assigned is but a slice of the canonical literature on these topics!

Exam (30%) You will have an in-class midterm exam on March 26.

Prospectus (30%) The final project for the class will be a research prospectus of approximately 15 pages in length, structured to match NSF requirements for grant proposals—though you may leave out details regarding specific sums requested. (We will discuss those requirements in class. Those students wishing to develop a comparable proposal targeting a different grant competition may do so, but should speak with me first.) The prospectus will allow you the chance to home in on a particular area in depth, while deploying your new-found knowledge of the approaches, methods, and literatures of comparative politics. (Regardless of your own ultimate research aims, this prospectus must fall within this subfield.) A 1-2 page précis (abstract or sketch) is due on April 2. While I expect you to have far more than 1-2 pages’ worth of ideas and material by then, I will enforce the page limit. Think of the précis as an executive summary of your prospectus, touching on research questions, guiding hypotheses and assumptions, methods, and literatures within which the project will fit; one cannot write such a summary without a fairly clear vision of the document as a whole. You will both submit and give a 15 minute presentation on your prospectus on the last day of class.

Special needs Students with special needs due to physical, learning, or other disabilities will be accommodated. To request such accommodation, first register with the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, http://www.albany.edu/disability/DRC/); they will provide you with a letter to me, detailing the provisions requested. To ensure equitable treatment of all students, please submit these letters within the first two weeks of the semester (in person, so we can discuss appropriate arrangements).

Academic honesty I expect all students to be ethical and honest in completing all work for this class. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the university’s guidelines on academic integrity (http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html); ignorance is NOT an
excuse. Violations of this code, such as plagiarism, cheating, copying, or misrepresentation of work as your own, will meet with appropriate penalties and discipline as outlined in UAlbany’s regulations, up to and including loss of course credit, suspension, or expulsion from the university. It is the responsibility of every student also to report any observed violations.

Course readings
Since we will read mostly journal articles or snippets of larger works, only one book is required for purchase; it is available from either the UAlbany bookstore or Mary Jane Books (or from your favorite second-hand/online bookstore; make sure to buy the correct edition). I will post all additional readings (chapters and articles) on Blackboard. You may wish to purchase at least some of the books from which these extracts are drawn, however, and/or to read beyond the segments indicated.


Schedule (readings are due on the date under which they are listed, but need not be read in the sequence listed):

22 Jan: Introduction

29 Jan: Meta-approaches to comparative politics

5 Feb: Comparative methods
• Charles Ragin, “Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research,” *Comparative Social Research* 16 (1997), pp. 27-42
• Alexander George & Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT, 2005), pp. 3-36
• James Mahoney & Dietrich Rueschemeyer, “Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas,” in Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 3-38

12 Feb:  **States & societies**

• Joel Migdal, “Researching the State,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 7
• Joel Migdal, Atul Kohli, & Vivienne Shue, *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 7-34 (Migdal) and 293-326 (Kohli & Shue)
• Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (California, 1989), pp. 1-9, 38-47

19 Feb:  **No class**

• Start looking into topics and approaches for your final project (prospectus)

26 Feb:  **Regime types & transitions**

• Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *APSR* 87: 3 (1993), pp. 567-76
• Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 3-43, 282-3
5 Mar: Democratic institutions

- Arend Lijphart, Democracy in Plural Societies (Yale, 1977), pp. 25-52

12 Mar: Collective action & contentious politics

- Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, & Charles Tilly, “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 10
- James Scott, Weapons of the Weak (Yale, 1987), pp. 28-48
- Mark Lichbach, The Rebel’s Dilemma (Michigan, 1995), pp. 3-32

19 Mar:   No class (Spring Break)

26 Mar:   Midterm exam (in class)

2 Apr:   Political economy: Modernization theory and beyond

  ➢ *Précis of prospectus due*

• Mark Blyth, “An Approach to Comparative Analysis or a Subfield within a Subfield: Political Economy,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 8
• Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon, 1944), pp. 56-76
• Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale, 1968), pp. 32-78

9 Apr:   Political economy: Development, welfare, & reform

• Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton, 1979), pp. 14-54

16 Apr: Nationalism & identity
• Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a …,” Ethnic and Racial Studies 1:4 (1978), pp. 377-400
• Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (Verso, 1991), chap. 2-3
• Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Cornell UP, 1983), pp. 39-62
• Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, 1973), pp. 255-79
• Donald Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict (California, 1986), pp. 55-92
• Optional (e.g., if you have already read some of the above): Kanchan Chandra, “Making Causal Claims about the Effect of ‘Ethnicity,’” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 15

23 Apr: The global and the local
• Etel Solingen, “The Global Context of Comparative Politics,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 9
• Ronald Rogowski, Commerce and Coalitions: How Trade Affects Domestic Political Alignments (Princeton, 1989), pp. 3-20

30 April: Conclusion
• Prospectus due in class
• Student presentations