

Department of Political Science  
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy  
University at Albany, SUNY

## **RPOS 550**

### **FIELD SEMINAR: COMPARATIVE POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

**Professor Meredith Weiss**

Spring 2019

Class: Monday 5:45-9:25; HS304

Office hours: By appointment, Milne 106A  
Tel: 518 442 5256 Email: mweiss@albany.edu

#### ***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 (30%)** 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. Bear in mind that this is a survey class; hence, our focus will be less on the empirics of specific pieces and more on the relations among and differences between the conceptual frameworks, substantive theories, and methodological perspectives represented by the assigned pieces.

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 synthesizing 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!

Aside from participating in class, you are *strongly* encouraged to attend **departmental seminars**, regardless of subfield. Not only might you find the speakers' research interesting and thought-provoking, but they will model for you how to give (or in some cases, how not to give ...) an academic seminar.

**Exam (30%)** You will have a midterm exam on **4 March**, taken during class time.

**Field paper (40%)** The final project for the class will be a paper of 15-20 pages in length that 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*. Your paper will survey and assess the relative merits of different research traditions and theoretical approaches in the study of a particular topic. In most cases, that topic will be among those covered in class. (If you prefer to focus on a topic not addressed in class, make sure to clear it with the professor first, to make certain it will be appropriate for the assignment.) You will need to extend beyond the assigned readings for your selected topic as you generate a wide-ranging critical survey of books and articles that represent competing theoretical arguments and research traditions as these have evolved in the study of that topic. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor in early April to make sure that their topics and outlines are suitable for this review paper. The paper is due by **5:00pm on Friday, May 10**. Each student will also give a 15 minute conference-style presentation of their paper in class that day.

### *General guidelines*

All written assignments must be **double-spaced**, with **1” margins**, in Times New Roman or a comparable font. Late papers will incur a non-negotiable penalty of **five points for each day late**. Papers should be thoroughly proofread, to avoid aggravating the reader.

*Accommodating disabilities* Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, medical, cognitive, learning and mental health (psychiatric) disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Disability Resource Center (518-442-5490; [drc@albany.edu](mailto:drc@albany.edu)). Upon verification and after the registration process is complete, the DRC will provide you with a letter that informs me that you are a student with a disability registered with the DRC and list the recommended reasonable accommodations. 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](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 the UAlbany bookstore (or your favorite second-hand/online bookstore; make sure to buy the correct edition). The rest of the required readings are available electronically. Those marked with “available on-line” can be retrieved by clicking on “EJournals” from the Libraries web page and typing in the title of the journal in the search box; book chapters will be on Blackboard.

- Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009, ISBN 9780521712347.

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

#### **28 Jan: Introduction**

- James Mahoney, “Debating the State of Comparative Politics: Views from Qualitative Research,” *Comparative Political Studies* 40:1 (2007), pp. 32-38 [available on-line]
- Gerardo Munck and Richard Snyder, “Debating the Direction of Comparative Politics,” *Comparative Political Studies* 40:1 (2007), pp. 5-31; 45-47 (Rejoinder to Mahoney) [available on-line]
- Matthew Charles Wilson, “Trends in Political Science Research and the Progress of Comparative Politics,” *PS* (October 2017), pp. 979-84 [available on-line]

#### **4 Feb: Meta-approaches to comparative politics**

- Lichbach & Zuckerman, chaps. 1-6 (Lichbach & Zuckerman, Lichbach, Zuckerman, Katznelson, Levi, Ross)
- David Laitin, "Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline," in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Norton, 2003), pp. 630-59

**11 Feb: Recognizing variations**

- Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (New York: Oxford, 1946 [1919])
- Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of World Capitalist System," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16:4 (1974): 387-415 [available on-line]
- Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back in: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer & Theda Skocpol, ed. *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, 1985), 1-28
- Eric Nordlinger, "Taking the State Seriously," in Samuel Huntington and Myron Weiner, ed. *Understanding Political Development* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1987), 353-90
- Gabriel Almond, "The Return of the State," *American Political Science Review* 82:3 (September 1988): 853-874 [available on-line]
- Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics," *American Political Science Review* 85:1 (March 1991): 77-96 [available online]
- Reinhard Bendix, "Relative Backwardness and Intellectual Mobilization," in J. Bendix, ed., *Unsettled Affinities* (Transaction Books, 1993), 85-102

**18 Feb: Comparative methods**

- James Mahoney, "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 62:1 (Jan. 2010), pp. 120-47 [available on-line]
- Adam Przeworski & Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (Wiley, 1970), pp. 31-46
- Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *APSR* 65 (1971), pp. 682-93 [available on-line]
- David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in D. Rustow & K. Erikson (ed.), *Comparative Political Dynamics* (HarperCollins, 1991), 7-31
- David Collier & James Mahon, "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis," *APSR* 87:4 (1993), 845-55 [available on-line]
- David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49:3 (1997), 430-51 [available on-line]
- Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases you Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," in J. Stimson (ed.), *Political Analysis* (Michigan, 1991), pp. 131-50
- Charles Ragin, "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research," *Comparative Social Research* 16 (1997), pp. 27-42 [available on-line]
- Alexander George & Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT, 2005), pp. 3-36

- Kathleen Thelen & James Mahoney, “Comparative Historical Analysis in Contemporary Political Science,” in J. Mahoney and K. Thelen, *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis* (Cambridge UP, 2015), pp. 3-36
- Robert Bates, Chalmers Johnson, & Ian Lustick, Contributions to “Controversy in the Discipline: Area Studies and Comparative Politics,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30:2 (1997), pp. 166-79 [available on-line]
- Ricks & Liu – Process Tracing

**25 Feb: States & societies**

- Joel Migdal, “Researching the State,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 7
- Stephen Krasner, “Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics,” *Comparative Politics* 16:2 (1984), pp. 223-46 [available on-line]
- 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)
- Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics,” *APSR* 85:1 (1991), pp. 77-96 [review from 6 Feb.]
- Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (California, 1989), pp. 1-9, 38-47
- Charles Tilly, “War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime,” in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 169-87
- Sunil Khilnani, “The Development of Civil Society,” in S. Kaviraj and S. Khilnani (ed.), *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: 2001), pp. 11-32

**4 Mar: Midterm exam**

**11 Mar: Regime types & transitions**

- Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *APSR* 87: 3 (1993), pp. 567-76 [available on-line]
- Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Beacon, 1960), pp. 1-39
- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 3-43, 282-3
- Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale, 1971), pp. 1-32
- Arend Lijphart, “Constitutional Choices for New Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 2:1 (1991), pp. 72-84 [available on-line]
- Philippe Schmitter, “Twenty-five Years, Fifteen Findings,” *Journal of Democracy* 21:1 (2010), pp. 17-28 [available on-line]
- Samuel Huntington, “How Countries Democratize,” *Political Science Quarterly* 106:4 (1991-2), pp. 579-616 [available on-line]
- Steven Levitsky & Lucan Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (2002), pp. 51-65 [available on-line]

- Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel, “Political Culture and Democracy: Analyzing Cross-level Linkages,” *Comparative Politics* 36:1 (2003), pp. 61-79 [available on-line]

**18 Mar: No class (Spring Break)**

**25 Mar: Democratic and electoral institutions**

- Jose Cheibub & Fernando Limongi, “Democratic Institutions and Regime Survival: Parliamentary and Presidential Democracies Reconsidered,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002), pp. 151-79 [available on-line]
- George Tsebelis, “Decision-Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism, and Multipartyism,” *BJPS* 26 (1995), pp. 289-326 [available on-line]
- Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (Yale, 1977), pp. 25-52
- Anthony Downs, “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy,” *Journal of Political Economy* 65:2 (1957), pp. 135-50 [available on-line]
- Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 3-55 (skim)
- G. Bingham Powell, Jr., “Political Representation in Comparative Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004), pp. 273-96 [available on-line]
- Robert Putnam, et al., “Explaining Institutional Success: The Case of Italian Regional Government,” *APSR* 77: 1 (1983), pp. 55-74 [available on-line]
- Herbert Kitschelt, “Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities,” *Comparative Political Studies* 33:6/7 (2000), pp. 845-79 [available on-line]
- House of Commons (UK) Library, *Voting Systems: The Jenkins Report* (Research Paper 98/112), 10 Dec. 1998 (skim, focusing on conceptual issues)

**1 Apr: Collective action & contentious politics**

- Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, & Charles Tilly, “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 10
- Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 92-122
- Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Harvard, 1971), pp. 5-52 (skim pp. 22-33)
- James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (Yale, 1987), pp. 28-48
- Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1-28
- Mark Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma* (Michigan, 1995), pp. 3-32
- Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 1-25

**8 Apr: Political economy I: Modernization theory and beyond**

- Mark Blyth, “An Approach to Comparative Analysis or a Subfield within a Subfield: Political Economy,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 8
- Walt Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 1-16
- Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Harvard, 1962), pp. 5-30
- Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon, 1944), pp. 56-76
- Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale, 1968), pp. 32-78
- Peter Evans & Dietrich Rueschemeyer, “The State and Economic Transformation,” in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol (ed.), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 44-77
- Adam Przeworski & Fernando Limongi, “Modernization: Theories and Facts,” *World Politics* 49:2 (1997), pp. 155-83 [available on-line]
- Douglass North & Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1-18

**15 Apr: Political economy II: Development, welfare, & reform**

- Isabela Mares, “The Comparative Political Economy of the Welfare State,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 14
- Gosta Esping-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton UP, 1990), pp. 9-34
- Peter Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times* (Cornell UP, 1986), pp. 17-34
- Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe & Latin America*, (Cambridge UP, 1991), pp. 136-87 (some skimmable)
- Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets* (Basic Books, 1977), pp. 3-13
- Robert Bates, “Governments and Agricultural Markets in Africa,” in R. Bates, *Toward a Political Economy of Development: A Rational Choice Perspective* (U California Press, 1988), pp. 331-58
- Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton UP, 1979), pp. 14-54
- Stephan Haggard, *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries*, (Cornell UP, 1990), pp. 23-48
- Chalmers Johnson, “Political Institutions and Economic Development: The Government-Business Relationship in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan,” in F. C. Deyo, *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* (Cornell UP, 1987), pp. 136-64
- Stephan Haggard, “The Developmental State is Dead: Long Live the Developmental State!,” in J. Mahoney and K. Thelen, *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis* (Cambridge UP, 2015), pp. 39-66

**22 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 [available on-line]

- 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
- Crawford Young, "The Dialectics of Cultural Pluralism: Concept and Reality," in C. Young (ed.), *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism* (Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 3-35
- Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (California, 1986), pp. 55-92
- James Fearon & David Laitin, "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation," *APSR* 90:4 (1996), pp. 715-35 [available on-line]
- Mala Htun, "Is Gender Like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups," *Perspectives on Politics* 2:3 (2004), pp. 439-58 [available on-line]
- *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

**29 Apr: The global and the local**

- Etel Solingen, "The Global Context of Comparative Politics," in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 9
- Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32:4 (1978), pp. 881-911 [available on-line]
- Peter Evans, "The Eclipse of the State: Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalization," *World Politics* 50:1 (1997), pp. 62-87 [available on-line]
- Linda Weiss, "Globalization and the Myth of the Powerless State," *New Left Review* 1/225 (1997), pp. 3-27 [available on-line]
- Ronald Rogowski, *Commerce and Coalitions: How Trade Affects Domestic Political Alignments* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 3-20
- Beth Simmons & Zachary Elkins, "The Globalization of Liberalization: Policy Diffusion in the International Political Economy," *APSR* 98:1 (2004), pp. 171-89 [available on-line]
- Geoff Garrett & Peter Lange, "Performance in a Hostile World: Economic Growth in Capitalist Democracies, 1974-1982," *World Politics* 38:4 (1986), pp. 517-45 [available on-line]

**6 May: Student presentations**

**Friday 10 May: Final papers due by 5:00pm** (via email or hard copy)