

Department of Political Science  
Rockefeller College  
University at Albany, SUNY

## **RPOS 550**

# **FIELD SEMINAR: COMPARATIVE POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

## **Spring 2011**

**Professor Meredith Weiss**

Class: Th 5:45-8:35  
HS 013

Office hours: Th 4:30-5:30 or by appointment, Downtown Campus, MH 213A  
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### ***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.

### ***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 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. 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 a take-home midterm exam in lieu of class **March 31**.

**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. (We will discuss those requirements in class.) The prospects 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. A 1-2 page précis is due in class **March 10**. 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](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 Mary Jane Books (or from your favorite second-hand/online bookstore). I will post all additional readings (chapters and articles) **on Blackboard**. If a link does not work or you are having trouble accessing Blackboard, find the readings in the library, instead. 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.

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

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

**20 Jan: Introduction**

**27 Jan: 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

**3 Feb: Comparative methods**

- 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
- 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
- David Collier and Steven Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” *World Politics* 49:3 (1997), 430-51
- 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
- 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
- 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

**10 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
- Hendrik Spruyt, “The Origins, Development, and Possible Decline of the Modern State,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5, June 2002, pp. 127-49
- 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)
- Gabriel Almond, “The Return to the State,” *APSR* 82:3 (1988), pp. 853-74
- Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics,” *APSR* 85:1 (1991), pp. 77-96
- 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

### **17 Feb: Regime types & transitions**

- Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *APSR* 87: 3 (1993), pp. 567-76
- 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
- Philippe Schmitter, “Twenty-five Years, Fifteen Findings,” *Journal of Democracy* 21:1 (2010), pp. 17-28
- Samuel Huntington, “How Countries Democratize,” *Political Science Quarterly* 106:4 (1991-2), pp. 579-616
- Steven Levitsky & Lucan Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (2002), pp. 51-65
- Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel, “Political Culture and Democracy: Analyzing Cross-level Linkages,” *Comparative Politics* 36:1 (2003), pp. 61-79

### **24 Feb: No class (Winter Break)**

### **3 Mar: Political 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

- George Tsebelis, “Decision-Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism, and Multipartyism,” *BJPS* 26 (1995), 289-326
- 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
- Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 3-49
- Scott Mainwaring & Timothy Scully, “Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America,” in Scott Mainwaring & Timothy Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, 1995), pp. 1-34
- G. Bingham Powell, Jr., “Political Representation in Comparative Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004), pp. 273-96
- Robert Putnam, et al., “Explaining Institutional Success: The Case of Italian Regional Government,” *APSR* 77: 1, pp. 55-74

### **10 Mar: Collective action & contentious politics**

- *Précis of prospectus due in class*
- Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, & Charles Tilly, “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 10 (30p)
- Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Harvard, 1971), pp. 5-52 (skim pp. 22-33)
- Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1-28
- Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 92-122
- James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (Yale, 1987), pp. 28-48
- 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

### **17 Mar: Political economy: Modernization theory and beyond**

- Mark Blyth, “An Approach to Comparative Analysis or a Subfield within a Subfield: Political Economy,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 8 (25)
- 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
- Douglass North & Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1-18

### **24 Mar: Political economy: Development, welfare, & reform**

- Isabela Mares, “The Comparative Political Economy of the Welfare State,” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 14 (20p)
- Gosta Esping-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton UP, 1990), pp. 105-38 (33p)
- Peter Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times* (Cornell UP, 1986), pp. 17-34 (17p)
- Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, (Cambridge UP, 1991), pp. 136-87
- 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, 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

### **31 Mar: No class**

- *Take-home exam* (due 5pm Friday, April 1)

### **7 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
- Kanchan Chandra, “Making Causal Claims about the Effect of ‘Ethnicity,’” in Lichbach & Zuckerman, chap. 15
- 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

- Mala Htun, “Is Gender Like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2:3 (2004), pp. 439-58

**14 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
- Peter Evans, “The Eclipse of the State: Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalization,” *World Politics* 50:1 (1997), pp. 62-87
- Linda Weiss, “Globalization and the Myth of the Powerless State,” *New Left Review* 1/225 (1997), pp. 3-27
- 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
- Geoff Garrett & Peter Lange, “Performance in a Hostile World: Economic Growth in Capitalist Democracies, 1974-1982,” *World Politics* 38:4 (1986), pp. 517-45

**21 Apr: No class (Spring Break)**

**28 Apr: Conclusion**

- *Prospectus due in class*
- *Student presentations*