

COMPARATIVE POLITICS PROSEMINAR II

Political Science 460, Spring Quarter 2020

Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 0900-1150

Venue: ~~Program of African Studies, 620 Library Place~~, Zoom (online)

Instructor: Will Reno

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Course Overview

The goal of this course is to provide an overview of major contemporary theoretical and empirical debates in the field of comparative politics. The readings are chosen to demonstrate how the field of comparative politics responds to important major “real world” developments and trends, such as the impact of inequality on politics, populism and its impact on old institutional structures in developed countries, the persistence of clientelism in democratic and authoritarian settings, and the evolving role of ethnic identity in politics. Students will be exposed to a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives that demonstrate different approaches to research in these topics.

Students will learn the technical language, important concepts, and a variety of methodologies that have shaped how scholars conduct comparative research on important topics. This survey of major contemporary debates in the field of comparative politics and important empirical material aims to provide students with a foundation to build their own research projects. This course also is designed to assist students who are preparing to take the comparative politics comprehensive exam.

Course Goals & Requirements

The readings, ~~in-class~~ online discussions and assignments are designed to contribute to students’ professional development as political scientists who are at the forefront of research and teaching. This seminar thus aims to cultivate three basic skills:

- Careful reading and engagement with core texts
- Engage in a scholarly dialogue with important ideas and information that shape the field of comparative politics
- Engage in constructive review and critique of peers’ work.

There are several ways that students will accomplish these goals:

Participation: Contributing to ~~classroom~~ online discussions plays an important role in engaging the ideas and approaches contained in the readings. As this is a discussion-based seminar, it is critical that students contribute to these discussions. Effective participation requires that students read assignments in good time to be able to reflect on their content.

Weekly critical statement: Each student will contribute a question or critical statement about the week's reading. These statements should be at least 150 words, and should provide commentary on assigned reading, such as highlighting an important theme or puzzle encountered in the reading, or situate that week's reading in relation to other works encountered in this course. These brief and concise statements should be uploaded to the "Discussion" section of the course's home page on Canvas by 21:00 the evening before the class meets.

A Paper: The paper, based on research or other project beyond the assigned readings, should be about 15-20 double-spaced pages, and is due on the first day of exams (Monday, June 8th). One option is to use this paper as a vehicle to try out ideas for a Research Paper® in satisfaction of the Department of Political Science's graduate program requirement and / or explore topics that might be relevant to eventual dissertations. Another option is to write this paper as a review essay or an article for eventual submission to a scholarly journal for publication. It also is possible to use the paper to develop a dissertation proposal, grant proposal, or chapter of a dissertation. Undergraduates will have the chance to develop a substantial writing sample that may be useful for inclusion in job or graduate school applications. Please submit all papers electronically.

"What should I write about?" This list provides suggestions and is not exhaustive. Students are welcome to suggest other approaches to fulfill this assignment.

1. An analytical paper will identify a significant puzzle related to current comparative research in the field. The emphasis of this type of paper will be on constructing a model or a theory to explain a problem. It may test the model or theory against a particular set of data. Graduate students who are looking for ways to develop a research paper to meet our program's research paper requirement might take interest in this option.
2. A review essay will survey a body of work related to a particular comparative politics puzzle. This type of essay frames and provides commentary on a debate (or identifies one that ought to take place) and identifies avenues for future research. Journals such as *World Politics* and *Perspectives on Politics* have good examples of this kind of essay. Some students find this approach useful for thinking about and preparing for the comparative politics comprehensive exam.
3. A research proposal for a grant application or dissertation proposal will identify a significant puzzle amenable to comparative research. It will evaluate current approaches to addressing this puzzle and justify the need for additional research. This sort of assignment then includes a research design to address this puzzle. Students seeking external fellowships may find this approach to the assignment to be a useful way to get advice and feedback for their applications to funders.

Grading Metric:

Class participation (online attendance, discussion)	20%
Weekly critical statement (cumulative)	20%
Final paper	60%

A Pandemic Word on Grading:

University authorities have asked the following information be included in this syllabus. In line with this mandate from our Provost, the following will be in effect:

... a new option of either a traditional letter grade or a Pass/No Pass grade in which, by default, students will receive a Pass/No Pass. We encourage only those who must have a letter grade for external accreditation, licensure, or reimbursement to opt-out of Pass/No Pass grading. Instructors teaching graduate courses will assign quality (letter) grades, which will convert to Pass/No Pass except where students have opted for a quality grade. Pass/No Pass grades do not count in the GPA; a Pass grade does earn a credit. Schools will follow up to advise students in programs where letter grades may be prudent and with information about allowing Pass/No Pass grades from Spring Quarter 2020 to fulfill requirements. In addition, add, drop and withdrawal deadlines for graduate students will be extended. These changes are reflected in the [academic calendar](#).

Students are encouraged to discuss grading options with the course instructor.

A Pandemic Word on Recording Online Proceedings &c

University authorities have mandated the language immediately below in this section be included in this syllabus. Since the instructor will not record any element of class sessions, a whole bunch of language does not need to be added. But there are other considerations:

Unauthorized student recording of class sessions is prohibited, and faculty should not permit individual students to record class sessions for any reason. Please have students direct requests related to accommodations to [AccessibleNU](#).

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](#). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings — including distributing or posting them — is also prohibited. Under the University's Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials — including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display or distribute these materials. Students who engage in

unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

And Finally, Course Readings:

Many of the books that are required texts for this course are generating a buzz these days. Thus quite a few of them may be available as cheap second-hand copies. In any event, students should acquire these books through their preferred online and brick-and-mortar means. So that text acquisition may be as frictionless as possible, here are the data you need:

Daron Acemoglu, Daron & James Robinson. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2009. **ISBN: 978-0521671422**

Castells, Manuel & Rosie Marteau [translator]. *Rupture: The Crisis of Liberal Democracy*, Polity, 2018. **ISBN: 978-1509532001**

Norris, Pippa & Ronald Inglehart. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*, Cambridge University Press, 2019. **ISBN: 978-1108444422**

Levitsky, Steven et al., *Challenges of Party-building in Latin America*, Cambridge University Press, 2016. **ISBN: 978-1316601402**

Mukhopadhyay, Diplai. *Warlords, Strongman Governors, and the State in Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, 2016. **ISBN: 978-1107595859**

Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Harvard University Press, 2017. **ISBN: 978-0674979857**

Przeworski, Adam. *Crises of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2019. **ISBN: 978-1108498807**

Roessler, Philip. *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap*, Cambridge University Press, 2016. **ISBN: 978-1316628218**

Thachil, Tariq. *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India* Cambridge University Press, 2018. **ISBN: 978-1107678446**

Wimmer, Andreas. *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart*, Princeton University Press, 2018. **ISBN: 978-0691202945**

Class Schedule

Tuesday, 7 April: What is the relationship between globalization and the politics of identity? To what extent are identity politics rooted in long-term trends versus algorithmically engineered products of social media? How do concepts like ‘space’ factor into comparative analysis, and what roles do technology and information flows play in the mobilization of identity?

Manuel Castells & Rosie Marteau [translator], *Rupture: The Crisis of Liberal Democracy*, Polity, 2018.

Tuesday, 14 April: What is the relationship between economic development and regime type? Does social transformation associated with economic growth and the intensification of global transactions inevitably lead to more democratic / open political systems? How do these authors conceptualize “social groups” and their institutional preferences?

Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Tuesday, 21 April: ‘Democracy crisis’ II: Social psychology and voter choice applied to addressing this puzzle. Do Millennial and Gen-Xers really see the world in very different ways than older generations?

Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Tuesday, 28 April: What is a “democracy crisis” and why are many mature democracies now facing an erosion of democracy? Do democratic breakdowns in the past provide insight into contemporary developments? What are the roles of increased polarization and rise of radical-right parties, alongside economic fundamentals related to income inequality and stagnation in incomes as facilitating factors?

Adam Przeworski, *Crises of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Tuesday, 5 May: Why are some African countries trapped in vicious cycles of ethnic exclusion and civil war, while others experience relative peace? Why do some rulers exclude certain ethnic groups if exclusion increases the risk of civil war? This is an example of a strategic, competing-risks model of ruler behavior.

Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Tuesday, 12 May: Why is political integration achieved in some diverse countries, while others are destabilized by exclusionary regimes prone to separatism and ethnic war? How does a historical institutional analysis contribute to the comparative argument about why states vary widely in their capacities to provide public goods? How does Wimmer's argument stand up against colonial legacies?

Andreas Wimmer, *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart*, Princeton University Press, 2018.

Tuesday, 19 May: What is the (contemporary) relationship between violence and order? Is 'extraordinary conflict' a necessary condition for creating organizational cohesion in political parties, and how 'extraordinary' does that conflict have to be? Can parties be durable and effective without this stimulus for strong partisanship?

Steven Levitsky, et al., *Challenges of Party-building in Latin America*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Tuesday, 26 May: Why do 'warlords' sometimes govern on behalf of the state and at other times govern against the state? Can 'warlords' contribute to a process of state-building, and how would this contribution differ from canonical views of the relationship of a weak state center and its unruly peripheries?

Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors, and the State in Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Tuesday, 2 June: Why do political parties occasionally refrain from mobilizing the poor to vote against their own interests (such as through identity-based appeals and / or the employment of networks that distribute government welfare benefits selectively)?

Tariq Thachil, *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Tuesday, 9 June: What explains variations in inequality across OECD "advanced market" countries? Why hasn't the dramatic rise in income inequality in the US happened in all rich economies? What forces drive growth and wealth accumulation in our modern economy?

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Harvard University Press, 2017.

Papers due on Tuesday, ~~2 June (start of exam week)~~. Actual due date TBD in a reasonable and commonsensical manner in consultation with students. FYI, Baccalaureate is scheduled for Thursday, 18 June.