

COMPARATIVE POLITICS PROSEMINAR II

Political Science 460, Winter Quarter 2022

Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 0900-1150

Venue: Scott 212

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. Underlying themes of political orders(s), the character of states and the origins of institutions (formal and otherwise) inform readings. Ultimately, the aim is to expose students to a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives that demonstrate different approaches to research in these topics, and to promote creativity in their own research.

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.

GOALS & REQUIREMENTS

The readings, 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 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 the day before Exam Week begins (Sunday, March 13th). 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%

AND THE COVID-19 STATEMENT

Students, faculty, and staff must comply with University expectations regarding appropriate classroom behavior, including those outlined below and in the [COVID-19 Code of Conduct](#). With respect to classroom procedures, this includes:

- Policies regarding masking and social distancing evolve as the public health situation changes. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with current masking, testing, Symptom Tracking, and social distancing requirements.
- In some classes, masking and/or social distancing may be required as a result of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation for the instructor or a student in the class even when not generally required on campus. In such cases, the instructor will notify the class.
- No food is allowed inside classrooms. Drinks are permitted, but please keep your face covering on and use a straw.
- Faculty may assign seats in some classes to help facilitate contact tracing in the event that a student tests positive for COVID-19. Students must sit in their assigned seats.

If a student fails to comply with the [COVID-19 Code of Conduct](#) or other University expectations related to COVID-19, the instructor may ask the student to leave the class. The instructor is asked to report the incident to the Office of Community Standards for additional follow-up.

AND THE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (e: accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

AND 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**

Dickson, Bruce. *The Party and the People: Chinese Politics in the 21st Century* Yale University Press, 2021. **ISBN: 978-0691186641**

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**

Mandić, Danilo. *Gangsters and Other Statesmen: Mafias, Separatists, and Torn States in a Globalized World*. Princeton University Press, 2021. **ISBN: 978-0691187884**

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**

Staniland, Paul. *Ordering Violence: Explaining Armed Group-State Relations from Conflict to Cooperation*, Cornell University Press, 2021. **ISBN 978-1501761119**

CLASS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, 5 January: 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.

Wednesday, 12 January: 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.

Wednesday, 19 January: ‘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.

Wednesday, 26 January: 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.

Wednesday, 2 February: 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.

Wednesday, 9 February: What is the impact of economic development and associated social change on regime type? How does China's authoritarian regime manage public opinion and calls for accountability? How do strong revolutionary parties survive societal transitions and generational change?

Bruce Dickson, *The Party and the People: Chinese Politics in the 21st Century*
Yale University Press, 2021.

Wednesday, 16 February: What is the (contemporary) relationship between violence, institutions, 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.

Wednesday, 23 February: What drives relationships between states and armed groups, and why do governments tolerate and accommodate armed groups? Should the study of political violence always focus foremost on violence? What is the role of 'armed politics' in sustainable political orders? Is 'armed politics' a distinctive South Asian phenomenon, or are Staniland's findings generalizable to other regions?

Paul Staniland, *Ordering Violence: Explaining Armed Group-State Relations from Conflict to Cooperation*, Cornell University Press, 2021.

Wednesday, 2 March: What is the relationship of war, crime, and state-building? Does 'globalization' change the logic of these relationships, compared to old 'war makes states' model? What place does nationalism hold in this process, either as social movements and / or elite-level instruments of statecraft?

Danilo Mandić, *Gangsters and Other Statesmen: Mafias, Separatists, and Torn States in a Globalized World*, Princeton University Press, 2021.

Papers due **Sunday, March 13th** (in accordance with College policy that papers must be due before exam week).

WCAS Reading Period begins Tuesday, March 8th. Winter grades are due to the Registrar by Monday, March 21st.