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PSCI 520.01: Comparative Government / Politics

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The University of Montana

Department of Political Science

Comparative Government/Politics

PSCI 520

Autumn, 2013; Tuesdays, 3:40-6:00 pm

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Implicit in the phrase “comparative government/politics” is the assumption that not only is one studying politics, but one is doing so in a particular manner, namely, by comparing. The point therefore, is not just to study the subject matter that comprises “politics” (or even “government”) but also to reflect on the manner in which one goes about doing so. This course will therefore involve as much reflection on ontological or meta-theoretical questions (what models of human behavior are assumed in explanations, and why? Are humans ‘rational,’ if so, in what sense; in other words how does one define rationality? What is culture, and how does it explain behavior, if it does so at all? How are cultural explanations different from other kinds of explanations? Do human beings make ‘choices’? If so, in what sense; and how constrained are these choices? Finally, what does it mean to ‘explain’ in political science or the other social sciences, for that matter?), as about the immediate subject matter of politics, broadly defined (state formation, democratization, nationalism, economic development, revolutions and civil wars). Indeed, I believe that we’ll quickly discover that the first set of questions is intimately related to the second set of topics and issues: in fact, one’s positions on the former imply certain answers to questions asked about the latter. Conversely answers to questions asked about the second set presume/imply positions on the first set of questions. In the course of the semester you should self-consciously try to approach the subject matter through the various meta-theoretical lenses mentioned, though the readings will often explicitly note this.

The first half of the course will mostly be taken up with an examination—though not exhaustive—of various topics traditionally falling within the domain of ‘Comparative Politics/Government.’ In the second half, (some) topical readings will be paired with more theoretical and abstract pieces that address the various metatheoretical issues alluded to above. Given the scope of the class, certain topics

traditionally within the ambit of comparative politics, such as legislative institutions and electoral systems, will not be covered this semester. Even among the topics covered, what you read will be less than the proverbial tip of the iceberg (indeed, each week could be easily expanded into a whole semester-long class to do the topics a modicum of justice). Therefore I encourage you to further explore the topics that pique your interest. I will be happy to direct you to further readings or classes. Thus, note finally, that the point here is not an exhaustive coverage of each and every issue mentioned above—an improbable task, to put it very mildly—but the provision of a set of intellectual ‘orientation devices’—for lack of a better word/phrase—with which to approach the study of politics, and other social sciences, for that matter.

Course Requirements

- Participation (20% of the grade): This course is a discussion seminar. As part of discussion, I will make an effort to contextualize the various works and offer readings of obscure passages. Nevertheless, the purpose of the seminar is to encourage you to engage these texts independently. Your thoughtful and well-prepared participation in class discussions will be decisive in whether or not the course is a success for you. If you are not keeping up with the readings, which are of necessity heavy, you will not enjoy or benefit from the course (it goes without saying—but I’ll mention it—that all this presumes that the readings are completed **before class** each week). Therefore, to further facilitate or even incentivize keeping up with the readings, I’ll require paper writers to circulate their papers by email to the entire class (and this is in addition to supplying me with a hard copy in the manner described below), and for the class to come prepared to discuss questions raised in the paper(s).
- 8 short papers addressing a particular week’s readings (40% of the grade): The papers should be about 3 pages in length, double-spaced (around 750 words). The purpose of these papers is to 1) delve deeper into the structure of the individual arguments 2) draw connections across the several arguments that you encounter and 2) formulate a critical reaction to them. You may want to delineate and adjudicate a dispute between two authors, or analyze a particular argument in light of others, or relate one or more of the week’s readings to earlier ones. You are encouraged to discuss your ideas for these papers with the instructors either by making an appointment or on e-mail. Please bear in mind that your task is to produce an argument of your own, and in this task summary of others’ arguments is a means to an end, not an end in itself. You may choose the sessions for which you would like to write a paper, but please try to space the papers throughout the semester rather than leaving them for the end. **All papers are due by 4:00 pm the day**

before class at my office (Room 355). In exceptional circumstances, I may accept email delivery of the paper.

- Final Review Essay or Final Exam (40%): You may choose between two final assignments for the course. The first is a review essay evaluating three books on a related subject published in the last five years. Your essay should discuss these works against a general background of the field in which they are situated. For models, see review essays in *Comparative Politics*, *APSR*, *World Politics* and *APSA CP*.

Alternatively, you can choose to write a final exam. The exam will consist of one long essay and two shorter ones, on questions drawn from a list that will be distributed before the exam.

Preparation for the exam will require a comprehensive mastery of the course material and should be particularly useful for those planning to take field/general exams in comparative politics.

Readings

The following books will be used in the seminar. You need not buy all of them, just the starred ones. All other readings should be available either through online databases such as Jstor (it's your responsibility to find them; you have on-campus access to databases, or if off-campus, through a proxy server), or through electronic course reserves. We can discuss other ways of making readings available, such as placing books on the library reserve etc, in class.

- Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1977)*
- Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge)
- Robert Bates et al, *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton, 1998)
- Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and the Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Beacon, 1993 and earlier editions)*
- Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge, 2003)
- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, 1979)*
- Robert Putnam et al, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton, 1993)*
- Thomas Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior* (Norton, 2006 and earlier editions)*
- Luis Fernando Medina, *A Unified Theory of Collective Action and Social Change* (Michigan, 2007)

Suggestions on effective reading

Graduate students should self-consciously guard against the dangers of passive reading, where one seemingly glances at, or even reads, the words on a page without actually making sense of the information gleaned, or being able to recall arguments and one's reactions to them. Given the amount of

reading we will do in this course, I recommend spacing out the readings in reasonable increments. Thoughtful reading takes time and energy. It is less taxing and more productive to read over several days than to compress all the reading into a couple of nights.

Next, think about what you are reading during the process; if you find yourself turning pages numbly, take a break, and then refocus on the author's chain of thought. When reading look for the author's argument and the evidence she uses to support it: What is the main claim she makes? With whom is she disagreeing? Then consider your reactions to the author's work: Does this make sense to you? Why or why not? What are the weaknesses of the argument? Write down thoughts you want to raise in class. Use highlighters only as a supplemental tool. Write your reactions to the text in the margins. Then archive your notes, such as by keeping a log on your computer or notebook— a useful way for returning to the information later when you are preparing for comps or composing a thesis prospectus. At some point after you have read, taken notes, organized them, and set them aside, see if you can summarize the author's argument in a few sentences. You may then want to take five minutes and write down this summary, particularly if you are reading several different texts in a given week. Remember that the goal of close reading is not just to have touched the pages, but to be able to say something about the material and evaluate it.

Some further tips (involves restatements of some of the things mentioned above):

1. You may want to look at short reviews of books published in scholarly journals prior to reading the actual book. This might help you in quickly getting to the fundamental arguments of the book.
2. Use diagrams to map out arguments, if necessary
3. You may want to form discussion groups to collectively go over the readings. In graduate school, learning from each other outside class is often as important as (learning from) class discussions.
4. You may also want to use a reading worksheet. Such a worksheet should consist of short answers—often a sentence or three—to the following questions: (a) what is the central question the reading addresses? (b) What is the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question? (c) What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate? (d) Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled? (e) Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.) (f) Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable. (g) In light

of your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.).

Professional Forums and Journals

The principal professional forms of interest to comparative political scientists include: the American Political Science Association (APSA) (www.apsanet.org); the Midwest Political Science Association, which meets in the Spring (<http://www.indiana.edu/~mpsa/>); the International Studies Association (<http://www.isanet.org>) as well as regional conferences; the Summer Methods conference (<http://web.polmeth.ufl.edu/conferences.html>); as well as the several conferences organized around regions or topics of interest (e.g. Association of Asian Studies (<http://www.aasianst.org/>); American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~aaass>); African Studies Association <http://www.africanstudies.org/>); Council for European Studies <http://www.europanet.org/frames/overall.html>) etc. It would be a good idea to find out about these associations from faculty in your area of interest and think of attending and presenting papers at their annual conferences.

The standard professional journals/newsletters of interest to comparative political scientists include: Comparative Politics, World Politics, APSA-CP (the newsletter of the Comparative Politics Section of the American Political Science Association), the American Political Science Review, Comparative Political Studies, Politics and Society, Journal of Democracy, and several multidisciplinary journals that focus on regions or topics of interest, such as East European Politics and Societies; Asian Survey; Journal of Asian Studies; Journal of Latin American Studies etc. You are encouraged to keep up with research in the journals of interest to you.

All students are expected to the standards of academic honesty as stipulated by the university (http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php).

Note: This syllabus—especially the parts on effective reading—has benefitted greatly from syllabi of courses taught by Jason Brownlee at the University of Texas, and previous courses taught at MIT by David Woodruff and Kanchan Chandra.

Schedule of Classes (May be subject to minor changes)

Week 1, August 27: *Overview of the field and the class*

No Readings

Week 2, September 3: *On explanations of human behavior, and the methods and subject matter of Comparative Politics*

- Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation"
- Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts*, pp.3-21
- Thomas Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, pp.11-43
- Gabriel Almond and Steven Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics," *World Politics* 29 (July 1977): 489-522
- Stanley Leiberson, "Small Ns and Big Conclusions: an Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases," *Social Forces*, 70:2 (December 1991)
- Douglas Dion, "Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study," *Comparative Politics* 30 (January 1998): 127-146
- Timothy Mckeown, "Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview: Review of King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry*," *International Organization* 53 (Winter 1999): 161-90

Week 3, September 10: *On (one kind of) Social Order: The State (as a concept first)*

- Stephen Krasner, "Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics," *Comparative Politics*, 16:2 (Jan, 1984), 223-246
- Karen Barkey and Sunita Parikh, "Comparative Perspectives on the State," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1991), pp. 523-549
- Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), pp. 77-96

Week 4, September 17: *On the origins of the state: theoretical explanations and empirical investigations*

- Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States* (Blackwell, 1992), chapters 1-4
- Hendrik Spruyt, "Institutional Selection in International Relations: State Anarchy as Order," *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 527-557

Week 5, September 24: *From States to Regimes: Conceptual Issues*

- Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (Harper, 1942), Part IV, pp. 240-296
- Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10.3 (1999) 3-17
- Philippe Schmitter, and Terry Karl, "What Democracy is... and is Not," *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 2, Number 3, Summer 1991
- David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in comparative Research," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997), pp. 430-451
- Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy. Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (1): 5-34

Week 6, October 1: *Origins of regimes/democratization, theory and (some) evidence*

- Lipset, Seymour M. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy": Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53 (1): 69-105
- Robert Putnam et al, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, 1993) pp.
- Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997), pp. 401-429
- Adam Pzeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics*, 49.2 (1997)

Week 7, October 8: *Continued*

- Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and the Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1966), Foreword, pp. 413-483, 3-39, 111-155
- Dietrich Rueschmeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 1-11, 12-39, 40-78
- Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 1-59
- Recommended: Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," Part I, from Robert Tucker, ed, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton), or
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01.htm>

Week 8, October 15: *The state in crisis: revolutions*

- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.3-161
- Jack Goldstone, “The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 8 (1982), pp. 187-207
- Kuran, Timur. 1991. “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989 (in Liberalization and Democratization in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe),” *World Politics* 44 (October): 7-48.

Week 9, October 22: *The State in Crisis: civil wars and ethnic conflict*

- James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), pp. 75-90
- Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Civil Wars,” in Boix & Stokes: *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*
- Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless?: The Logic of Massacres in Algeria,” *Rationality and Society*, August 1999 vol. 11 no. 3 243-285
- Stathis N. Kalyvas, “The Ontology of “Political Violence”: Action and Identity in Civil Wars,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Volume 1 / Issue 03 / September 2003, pp. 475-494

Week 10, October 29: *Nationalism*

- Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell, 1983), 1-62
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 1983), 1-65
- Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1989), 46-130

Week 11, November 5: *The State, the market, and economic development*

- Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon, 1944), pp. 43-85
- Santhi Heejebu and McKloskey, “The Reproving of Karl Polanyi,” *Critical Review*, Volume 13, issue, 3-4 (1999)

- Alexander Gershenkron, “Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective,” in Mark Granovetter, and Richard Swedberg (eds), *The Sociology of Economic Life* (Westview, 1992)
- Kiren Chaudhry, “The Myths of the Market and the Common History of the Late Developers,” *Politics and Society*, 21:245 (1993)
- Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place: State Building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton, 2003) pp.1-49
- Douglass C. North, “Institutions,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter, 1991), pp. 97-112

Week 12, November 12: *Institutions and economic development*

- Acemoglu, D., S. Johnson, and J.A. Robinson (2005), “Institutions As a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth,” in P. Aghion and S.N. Durlauf (eds), *Handbook of Economic Growth*, Vol. IA
- Chang, H.J. (2011), “Institutions and economic development: theory, policy and history,” *Journal of Institutional Economics* doi:10.1017/S1744137410000378
- Chang, H.J. Reply to Comments on “Institutions and Economic Development”

Week 13, November 19: *Meta)theoretical reflections; on the various ways of explaining human behavior: culture and rationality, the individual and the collective*

- Luis Fernando Medina, *A Unified Theory of Collective Action and Social Change* (Michigan, 2007), 3-82
- Robert Bates, et al, *Analytic Narratives*, Chapters 1, 3, and 4
- Jon Elster, “Rational Choice History: A Case of Excessive Ambition,” *The American Political Science Review* 94:3 (2000) and responses
- Marc Howard Ross, “Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis,” in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics, Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (Cambridge, 1997)
- Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Apr., 1986), pp. 273-286

- Marc Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 91:3 (1985), 481-510

Week 14, November 26: On the role of theories in political science, or what defines (or makes for) a good explanation?

- Mark Lichbach, “Social Theory and Comparative Politics,” in Lichbach and Zuckerman (eds)
- Raymond Boudon, “Beyond Rational Choice Theory,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29:1 (2003) or Amartya Sen, “Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Assumptions of Rational Choice Theory,”
- Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 1-54 (and chapter 15, recommended)
- Steven Lukes, “Methodological Individualism Reconsidered,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jun., 1968), pp. 119-129
- Jon Elster, “The Case for Methodological Individualism,” *Theory and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Jul., 1982), pp. 453-482
- Lars Udehn, “The Changing Face of Methodological Individualism,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28 (2002)- Recommended

Week 15, December 3: More on Methods and theories of comparative politics

- Alisdair McIntyre, “Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible,” in Allan Ryan (ed), *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*
- Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Science of Man,” in Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, eds, *Understanding and Social Inquiry*
- Albert Hirschman, “The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding,” *World Politics* 22 (April 1970): 329-43
- Katzenstein et al, “The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: a Symposium,” *World Politics* 48, October, 1995
- Alan S. Zuckerman, “Reformulating Explanatory Standards and Advancing Theory in Comparative Politics,” in Lichbach and Zuckerman (eds)