

SYLLABUS

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Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to the basic concepts, methods, primary empirical materials, theoretical approaches, and current challenges of comparative politics. Students will be trained to think and write critically on substantive issues in the politics of different countries. Although comparative politics is often defined as “the study of all countries *excluding* the United States,” this course will not abide by that rather perfunctory definition. The U.S. will be included at different points in the course as a baseline for comparison.

As a primer for newcomers to this subdiscipline of political science, the course has been organized with an increasing level of difficulty. Students begin with an introduction to the most basic tools of political science; then they are trained to analyze complex empirical materials. Later, they must make their way up the “ladder of abstraction” to the tricky world of theory-building and hypothesis-testing.

In the first section of the course (Session 1), students will examine the methods, concepts, and epistemology of comparative politics. Learning how to use these tools to study politics is similar to “basic training.” I prefer: a “bootcamp for the mind” - not very pleasurable, but very necessary. Aspiring majors in political science and/or international relations will find this primer useful. I *strongly recommend* that such students enroll in POSC 230 Methods of Political Research soon after completing this course.

The second section of the course (Sessions 2 and 3) introduces students to four country cases - Britain, Germany, Russia, and China – and a study of the European Union. This survey will provide students with a basic lay of the political land. Students will learn about the crucial moments, institutions, processes, and individuals that shaped the political experiences of these major actors in world politics. The surveys will also present several “mid-range propositions” - causal statements about particular sets of countries that come in handy when attempting to understand complex empirical materials. The department offers a number of 200- and 300-level thematic and regionally-specific courses on Europe, Latin America, South East and East Asia, and Africa that act as perfect follow-ups for what students learn during these sessions.

As students use these empirical cases and mid-range propositions, class lectures will introduce students to some of the theoretical arguments that have been built on the comparative study of the countries examined in this section. The study of Britain and Germany will inform our on-

going discussion about diverse routes to democracy; Russia and China will provide empirical material for the application of theories about state-building and revolution that are taken from work on Western Europe; the study of China will highlight the problems of transitioning to democratic governance in the context of “late late” development; and analysis of the European Union will inform our examination of how the effectiveness of public policies might be evaluated using social science methods.

Thus empowered with a solid methodological and empirical background, section 3 of the course is devoted to completing and presenting a group data analysis project employing both quantitative and qualitative empirical materials (Session 4).

In addition to instruction on political science methods, theory, empirical data, and the data analysis project, students in this course will receive workshop instruction on writing, oral presentation skills, and research techniques. Workshops will occur during the regular class time.

What is Expected of Students

Students will be expected to read, think, criticize, and form arguments. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the readings and concepts from previous lectures. The best students will be critical but balanced in their assessments, and will develop coherent arguments that they can defend in their writing and their in-class discussion. Attendance is required.

Reading Materials

This course requires your purchase of one textbook, which is presently on sale at the college bookstore:

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, and William A. Joseph, eds. 2006. *Introduction to Comparative Politics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. The best collection of “middle-range” studies of comparative cases currently on the market. We will refer to this reading as “KKJ,” for short.

The following is optional for purchase (available on Amazon.com and other purveyors):

W. Phillips Shively. 2002. *The Craft of Political Research* Sixth Ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

In addition to these texts, this course requires your study of a number of other readings from diverse sources. These readings are all available on reserves. Additionally, I will occasionally distribute electronic clippings from *The New York Times*, the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, Google, Wikipedia, and YouTube via email. Additional resources are available on the course’s web page and my resources page.

Grading

Assessment of the students in this course will be based on their performance on two short papers, a group data analysis project with oral presentation and written report components, and classroom participation. The grade breakdown follows:

First Writing Assignment	20%
Second Writing Assignment	30%
Group Data Analysis Project	30%
Preliminary Report:	(5%)
Group Dynamics:	(5%)
Oral Presentation:	(5%)
Final Report:	(15%)
Class Participation (including periodic diagnostic exams)	20%

Writing Assignments

Paper assignments in this course are of varying lengths. Yet they must all be typed, paginated, and double-spaced with 12cpi font size and one-inch margins (unjustified). I require the use of Times New Roman font type as this is a cross-platform variety.

These assignments must be turned in as PDF files unless otherwise indicated by 5 p.m. in the student's hand-in folder on the Courses directory on the due date specified below. *Late work will receive no credit.* Technical problems involved in converting and uploading work onto Courses will not be accepted as a reason for late or improperly formatted work. Students remain responsible for addressing all glitches unless they are systemic. Proper use of spelling, punctuation, and grammar is expected. Since ability to edit your own work and produce concise argument is a touchstone for assessing and developing your critical skills, students will not be allowed to surpass the required number of pages. A handout will be distributed with the particular parameters of each of these assignments well before the due date.

This course is designated a WR course. I will gladly authenticate papers for the portfolio.

Paper #1 (Methods Exercise):

Students will be asked to select a single article from a list of citations, find and download a copy in PDF format. Once acquired, students will evaluate the article by identifying the main argument, the key variables, indicators for variance, and main concepts. Students must specify if the concepts are clear to them or not. If not, they must explain why. This paper must be four to five pages in length. Additional requirements of this Methods Exercise will be made available in a handout.

Paper #2 (Mid-Range Proposition Building Exercise):

Based on their study of Britain, Germany, Russia, and China students will prepare a five to six page paper proposing a causal argument about the formation and maintenance of democracy. They will support their argument with a brief qualitative comparison of two of the three countries listed above. Papers that integrate light research and present both quantitative and qualitative data to support the author's claims will receive the highest grades.

Group Data Analysis Project

As the class begins to consider empirical cases, the students will be divided into groups of 3-4 members. Each group will be charged with the task of collecting quantitative data on a number of countries as part of a collaborative project involving a choice of hypotheses concerning the link between socio-economic development and democratization. Each group will work with the professor to focus their project and they will consult Kristin Partlo, the social science librarian, for help in acquiring the necessary data. Each research team will carry on some of their discussions in Caucus so that the professor may monitor the group's progress. Using Excel and/or SPSS, a statistical program, each group will analyze the quantitative data they have collected and render a report of 6-8 pages due at the end of the term. Each group will present their data formally in a timed presentation to the class during the final week of the term. A detailed handout will describe the format and other aspects of this project during Session 2.

While each member of the research groups will receive a share of the group score on the written report and the oral presentation, peers will prepare confidential, written insights on the contribution of all other members. Additionally, group members will be required to post on their Caucus conference evidence of *consistent* progress. This data and the professor's own observations will be used to adjust the individual score for group members, if need be. Students ought to be aware that the poor performance of any one member of their research team can affect the scores of their colleagues. Hence, group dynamics scores are, like the presentation scores (although less strictly so), the products of collective responsibility.

The group assignment will be evaluated with four grades – the first for a preliminary report on the variables and data the group is working with; the second for the relative capacity of the group members to collaborate successfully; the third for the group oral presentation; and the fourth for

the final report due at the end of the term.

Class Participation

Communicating your insight into the subjects analyzed in this course is an integral part of the learning experience. In no way do I consider class participation a residual category for subjectively determining the final grade. In this course, I will evaluate your performance in both formal, scheduled presentations and informal class discussion. The following are structured presentation formats that will be used in this course, in addition to the formal presentation of the group research project:

- (1) A simulation on Russian democracy and state capacity.
- (2) A debate on human rights and political liberalization in China.
- (3) Small group discussions on some reading.

In addition to these activities, occasionally students will prepare homework assignments or answer written and oral questions based on the readings and the lectures. These periodic “diagnostics” will assess listening and reading comprehension skills. They will compose half of the total participation score.

Discussion Section

I offer informal and voluntary discussion sections on the graded assignments in this course. These sessions, which take the form of Q&A meetings with the professor, will usually be held in the classroom during common time.

The Grading Scale

I will be using the following grading scale in this course:

98-100 A+
94-97 A
91-93 A-
88-90 B+
83-87 B
79-82 B-
76-78 C+
72-75 C
68-71 C-
67/below D/F

Academic Misconduct

Given the fact that academe relies upon the ethical conduct of scholars, students are held to the same standards in their own work. Any act of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean. For further information, see the useful handout on “Avoiding Academic Misconduct,” available on the course webpage.

Special Needs

Students requiring access to learning tools/special schedules approved by Student Support Services should contact me at the beginning of the course.

NOTE: Readings must be completed for the dates assigned below.

SECTION I

BOOTCAMP FOR THE MIND:

THE TOOLS OF STUDYING COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Session 1: Science! Assumptions, Causal Relationships, Concepts, Method, and Variables

Toward a *Science* of Politics: The Rational-Choice Assumption (March 27, Tuesday)

Richard Harter, “Piltdown Man” (A Cautionary Tale About The Importance of Verification in Scientific Inquiry).

Daniel Dennett, “Show Me the Science,” *New York Times* (August 28, 2005).

Theory and Comparative Method: How Do We Know a Good Causal Argument When We See One? (March 29, Thursday)

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, Chapter 1.

Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, ch. 6.

Recommended: Gerardo Munck, “Canons of Research Design in Qualitative Analysis,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 33:3 (1998): 18-45.

Variables, Definitions, and Conceptualization (April 3, Tuesday)

Philippe Schmitter & Terry Lynn Karl, “What Democracy Is....and Is Not,” *Journal of*

Democracy (Summer 1991).

Skills Workshop #1: Methods Exercise and Writing Basics (April 5, Thursday)

Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, chs. 7 and 9.

Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20:1 (Summer 1995): 5-38.

Review Excel spreadsheet program. Prepare bivariate correlation homework assignment for April 9, Monday.

SECTION II

THE COUNTRY SURVEYS:

DIFFERENT ROUTES TO MODERNITY AND DEMOCRACY

Session 2: The Advanced Capitalist States: Class, the State, and Institutions in the Building of Democracy

Britain

"No bourgeoisie, no democracy": The Barrington Moore Theorem (April 10, Tuesday)

KKJ, Chapter 2, Sections 1-3

Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966, pp. 413-432.

NO CLASS APRIL 12, THURSDAY – MPSA CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO

Critiques of Barrington Moore: Skocpol and Institutionalist Arguments (April 17, Tuesday)

Theda Skocpol, "A Critical Review of Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*," *Politics and Society* 4:1 (1973): 1-34.

KKJ, Chapter 2, Sections 4-5

Germany

How Democracies Die: By Natural Causes or Murder? (April 19, Thursday)

Juan Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 14-32 and 50-58.

KKJ, Chapter 4, Sections 1-3.

SHORT PAPER #1: METHODS EXERCISE DUE (April 20, Friday)

THE DATA ANALYSIS GROUP ASSIGNMENTS ARE DISTRIBUTED (April 20, Friday) – CAUCUS DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BEGIN AFTER THIS DATE

Bringing the Social Back In: Social Democracy and Its Crisis (April 24, Tuesday)

KKJ, Chapter 4, Sections 4-5.

Philip Manow and Eric Seils. 2000. "The Employment Crisis of the German Welfare State." *West European Politics* 23:2 (April).

Eckhard Hein and Achim Truger. 2005. "Whatever Happened to Germany?" *International Review of Applied Economics* 19:1 (January).

Skills Workshop #2: Data Analysis Research (Dataset Preparation), Using the Library and Other Resources (April 26, Thursday)

Examine the SPSS Tutorial

Review Shivley's chapters 6-7, and 9.

The European Union

History and Institutions (May 1, Tuesday)

Europa webpage (http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm) (Become familiar with the material on the "Institutions" tab. Also review the Statistics (Eurostat) webpage under the "Services" tab).

Helen Wallace. 2005. "The Institutional Setting." In *Policy-Making in the European Union* 5th Ed. Helen Wallace and William Wallace, eds. New York: Oxford University Press.

The Economist. 2007. "Future of the European Union." (March 17).

PRELIMINARY DATA REPORTS DUE (May 2, Wednesday)

The Travails of the Modern EU (May 3, Thursday)

Ian Ward. 2003. "A Decade of Europe? Some Reflections on an Aspiration." *Journal of Law and Society* 30:2 (June): 236-57.

Paul Magnette. 2003. "European Governance and Civic Participation: Beyond Elitist Citizenship?" *Political Studies* 51:1: 144-60.

Skills Workshop #3: Working with SPSS: The Case of EU Structural Funding (May 8, Tuesday) (Writing Workshop on Paper 1 too)

EU Regional Policy DG http://europa.eu.int/pol/reg/index_en.htm

David Allen. 2000. "Cohesion and the Structural Funds: Transfers and Trade-Offs." In *Policy-Making in the European Union*, 4th Ed. Helen Wallace and William Wallace, eds. New York: Oxford University Press.

"EU Structural Funds Project" reports. Select **one**, Team A-D
http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/ocs/maastricht/Spring_05/research/

Session 3: Transitional States

Russia

State-Building As Organized Crime: The Russian Case (May 10, Thursday)

Charles Tilly. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.

KKJ, Chapter 10, Sections 1-2

Russian Democracy as a Problem of State-Building (May 15, Tuesday)

KKJ, Chapter 10, Sections 3-5

Alexandra V. Orlova. 2004. "From Social Dislocation to Human Trafficking: The Russian Case," *Problems of Post-Communism* 51:6 (November-December).

Film: "PBS Frontline: Return of the Czar." (Will be shown in a place, time, and date TBA).

The Russia Simulation

China

From Political Revolution to Economic Reform (May 17, Thursday)

KKJ, Chapter 11, Sections 1-5

Film: “PBS Frontline: China in the Red.” (Will be shown in a place, time, and date TBA).

Does Economic Development Guarantee Democratization? (May 22, Tuesday)

An Chen. 2002. “Capitalist Development, Entrepreneurial Class, and Democratization in China,”
Political Science Quarterly 117:3 (Fall): 401-423.

The China Debate

SHORT PAPER #2: PROPOSITION-BUILDING EXERCISE DUE (May 21, Monday)

SECTION III

**TESTING THE DEVELOPMENT-DEMOCRACY LINK:
THE DATA ANALYSIS GROUPS SPEAK**

Session 4: Student Perspectives on the Development-Democracy Nexus

Data Analysis Group Presentations (May 24, Thursday; May 29, Tuesday)

PEER EVALUATIONS DUE (May 30, Wednesday)

DATA ANALYSIS GROUP REPORTS DUE (June 4, Monday)