Core Course in Comparative Politics

Brightspace: https://mycourses.eui.eu/d2l/home/13505
First term seminar, 2023–24
Thursday 11:00 – 13:00, Seminar Room 2
Zoom meeting ID/password: Available on Brightspace

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Course Description: The Core Course in Comparative Politics is designed to introduce graduate students to current topics of scholarly interest in the study of domestic politics in countries around the world. We survey a broad range of different literatures and issues. The course is not comprehensive but rather serves to introduce especially lively areas of research. We read materials that focus on contemporary countries in the world as well as some historical studies.

We have included one (or perhaps two) “big” readings each week but have mainly oriented the syllabus towards readings that may represent inspirational examples of work on which to model your own research. This means that there are many important and perhaps even canonical readings that are not on the syllabus. For ideas about what these are, consult the comparative politics reading lists for graduate students at departments that require students sit traditional comprehensive exams. Examples include the lists available from the political science departments at Columbia University and Yale University.

We expect every student to be prepared to discuss any assigned reading each week. You may need to read some items more than once to be able to do that. Your goal should be to attend class prepared to summarize the main point(-s) of each reading as well as to
be able to present a brief and accurate review of the approach, argument, and evidence — all in two to three minutes. If it takes you longer than that, you haven’t mastered the material.

For guidance on how to approach the readings each week, see Macartan Humphrey’s discussion.

Officially, the EUI allows you to miss two class meetings and still receive credit for the course but we urge you to attend all sessions except in cases of severe illness.

In addition to showing up, all students will be expected to participate actively in every class meeting, including but not limited to the “cold-call” oral summaries of the readings described above. In-class performance will count for 25 percent of your grade.

The other 75 percent of your evaluation will be based on your performance on two written assignments. The first requires you to write a brief critical review of any single reading assigned during the term and to submit the review before the start of the class which discusses the reading. The second consists of an written assessment (see below for details). In most other graduate programs in political science around the world, students must sit comprehensive exams in two or more fields before they are permitted to move on to dissertation work. The final examination for this course will be along the same lines, although we will hold you responsible only for the topics covered in the course and, within each topic, only for the readings that were assigned. Details of both assignments are provided below. The critical review will contribute 15 percent of your course grade and the final examination 60 percent. All enrolled students will have the same requirements.

Course Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course. Students from all years are encouraged to enroll.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, you will:

1. Be familiar with many major questions in the field of comparative politics.
2. Be familiar with important recent studies in comparative politics.
3. Be familiar with cutting-edge research methods used in the study of comparative politics.
4. Have acquired a base of readings that will allow you to begin to conduct independent research in comparative politics.

Course Format: It remains prudent to imagine that the course may meet in a hybrid mode. This will allow you to participate even if you do not feel well and must remain in your lodging. Please make sure to position yourself so we can all see you well during class, to mute your microphone except when speaking, and to use the blue hand to indicate when you have a comment or question. Please do not turn off your video during
class without specific justification or during the 10 minute mid-session break.

The course is designed mainly around discussion of assigned readings, so you are expected to participate actively in every course meeting. If you are attending via Zoom, please test your setup to ensure your microphone works and is powerful enough for us to hear you. Likewise, please make sure you have good enough speakers so you can hear other participants.

**Required readings:** You are responsible for locating all assigned reading materials. This serves as practice in developing research and library skills. Please let us know if you experience problems. Scanned copies of readings that are unavailable electronically have been posted on Brightspace.

**Requirements:** To complete the course, you have two written requirements.

1. **Critical review:**

   You will write a 1,000 word (maximum) critique of any assigned reading during the term. This critical review should briefly summarize the main points of the article, explain what evidence was used and how it was evaluated, and then present your principle concerns or objections to the work. Your goal is to highlight the weaknesses of the reading, and perhaps even to suggest how one might improve on the study you critique. Your review should be well structured and use grammatically correct, accurate English.

2. **Final assessment:**

   - Students who take the seminar as a **core course** will sit an 8-hour open-book assessment at the end of the term. You may take this assessment anywhere you wish as long as you submit your final answers with a time-stamp that is within 10 minutes of when the assessment period is due. The assessment is provisionally scheduled for Thursday 14 December, 09:00–17:00. It can be rescheduled for another day in the same week if any enrolled core students have unmodifiable academic conflicts. The assessment will ask you to synthesize ideas across readings and across weekly topics. You will be asked to choose two questions (from a larger selection) and you will have to compose your answers, of approximately 2,000 words each, during the eight hours. You may not discuss your work in any way with anyone else during the assessment. You will submit your answers electronically.
   
   - Students who take the seminar as an **elective course** can EITHER take the 8-hour assessment, above, OR can write a longer essay, of approximately 4,000 words on ONE of the questions from the same assessment paper. The deadline for submitting the essay, via Brightspace, will be on Monday 18 December at 17:00.
Course Policies:

- **General (for auditors as well as enrolled students)**
  - Please come to class meetings each week already having read assigned material.
  - Please bring written notes to class summarizing each assigned reading and be prepared to discuss every assigned reading.
  - Research shows that taking notes by hand promotes learning. Please consider taking notes on the readings by hand. It will improve your mastery of the material.
  - If you are auditing the course, please inform Monika, who can give you access to course materials on Brightspace.

- **Credit and Grades**
  - In order to receive credit for the course, you must attend at least 8 of the 10 course meetings, submit the assigned critical review, and sit the final examination.
  - Your critical review of a single reading must be submitted to the designated Brightspace link before the start of the class meeting where we discuss the reading in order to receive credit.
  - Final examinations are to be submitted on time to be given full credit. Please ensure that the timestamp for your submission is within ten minutes of the time due. You must submit a timely final examination for course credit.
  - Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of 25 percent for classroom participation, 15 percent for the critical review, and 60 percent for the final exam.
  - Course grades will be assigned using the standard U.S. graduate seminar grading scheme. This scheme is as follows:
    * A excellent
    * A- very good
    * B+ good
    * B adequate
    * B- inadequate

**Ethics:** All work you do will be held to the highest ethical and professional standards. You are encouraged to discuss readings amongst yourselves, but you must write your critical review and your final examination alone and you may not discuss them with others as you work. Ethical violations will be reported to appropriate departmental and university authorities.
SYLLABUS

PART I: DEVELOPMENT AND STATE CAPACITY

Week One, October 5: Democracy and Democratization

*Instructor: Simon Hix*

*Required readings:*


*Recommended readings:*


Week Two, October 12: Non-Democratic and Electoral Authoritarian Regimes

Instructor: Simon Hix

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


Week Three, October 19: The Political Economy of Taxes and Transfers

Instructor: Miriam Golden

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


Beramendi, Pablo and Anderson, Christopher J., eds. 2008. *Democracy, Inequality, and...*
**PART II: DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Week Four, October 26: Representation and Accountability**

*Instructor: Miriam Golden*

**Required readings:**


Dunning, Thad et al., eds. 2019. *Information, Accountability, and Cumulative Learning: Lessons from Metaketa I*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chs. 1–2 and 11–12, as well as any case study chapter other than ch. 10. Please bring a succinct written summary of your case to class.


**Recommended readings:**


Week Five, November 2: Parties and Party Systems

Instructor: Simon Hix

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


**Week Six, November 9: Bureaucracies and State Capacity**

**NOTE: CLASS HELD IN REFECTORY**

*Instructor: Miriam Golden*

**Required readings:**


**Recommended readings:**


Week Seven, November 16: Electoral Systems and Parliaments

Instructor: Simon Hix

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


**PART III: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR**

**Week Eight, November 23: Voting and Values**

*Instructors: Filip Kostelka, Simon Hix*

*Required readings:*


*Recommended readings:*

**Turnout**


Voting Patterns


Abou-Chadi, Tarik and Simon Hix. 2021. “Brahmin Left versus Merchant Right?” Edu-
cation, Class, Multiparty Competition, and Redistribution in Western Europe.” *British Journal of Sociology* 72(1): 79—92.


**Week Nine, November 30: Political Culture**

*Instructors: Miriam Golden, Elias Dinas*

Required readings shown with asterisk (*).

**Meanings of Culture**


Jared Rubin, “Culture in Historical Political Economy:” *Broadstreet*

**Origins of Culture**


Cultural Persistence


Cultural Change


**Week Ten, December 7: Environmental Politics**

*Instructors: Miriam Golden*

**Required readings:**


**Recommended readings:**

