

Seminar in Comparative Politics*

Political Science 8500
University of Nebraska Omaha
Summer 2016 (May 16-Aug. 12)
Totally Internet Mediated

Brett J. Kyle, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) Faculty
University of Nebraska Omaha

Arts and Sciences Hall 275
Phone: 402-554-3704
Email: bjkyle@unomaha.edu
Web: www.brettkyle.com

Course Objective

The purpose of the course is to gain an overview of the major theories of the subfield of comparative politics. We will be examining a number of the leading approaches to this subfield, particularly with an eye toward understanding their strengths and weaknesses. (Prerequisite: Permission of graduate advisor).

Course Materials

Lichbach, Mark Irving and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition. (**Noted as LZ in weekly reading list**).

Individual class readings are available on the Blackboard course site under Course Materials.

Additionally, I expect you to keep up-to-date with current events by reading the [New York Times](#), the [BBC](#), and other **high-quality** journalism of your choosing. Comparative Politics is the study of politics around the world, which requires knowing what is happening in the world. I recommend signing up for the [Quartz Daily Brief](#), a daily digest of news with links to original stories. And, by all means explore media sources in the local language of countries you are interested in if you speak languages other than English.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Participation (Discussion Board): 40%

Research Literature Review: 40%

Final Exam: 20%

Discussion Board: Because this is an online graduate-level class, strong, high quality participation in the Discussion Board is mandatory.

* Special thanks to Jody Neathery-Castro, Ramazan Kilinc, and Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado for their work in developing the syllabus for this course.

All students are required to participate in the class discussion, held on the Discussion Board section of the Blackboard course site. I will post discussion question(s) each week (and potentially supplemented by additional questions, depending on the progress of the discussion), along with a deadline for posting your answer. All discussion questions will be based on the reading assignments (and, at times, current events). You will be expected to answer each of my questions and the questions for your classmates, as well as comment on the answers of your classmates when you have a question or something to add. Your grade will be based on the number of discussions you participate in, the number of questions you ask and answer, and **the overall quality** of your comments.

Please leave ample time to read the work assigned each week carefully. In most cases, you'll be well-served to read the selections in the order in which they're listed. **Take notes when you read.** There is a lot of material to digest, and this will serve you in the short term by making it easier to recall the important points from each reading and to see how they fit together. And in the long-term, it will serve you to have a catalogue of summary information and your thoughts and questions, in particular when you come across new material in future studies (writing papers where you expect to use that body of literature, taking other courses, going on to a PhD program, etc). While you are reading, you should consider the following questions:

- **What is the author's argument?** What research question is the author trying to answer, and how does he or she do it? What are the assumptions (explicit and implicit) upon which the author's argument is based? What are the independent and dependent variables, and what is the logic that links them together?
- **Is the theory logically consistent?** That is, does the theory adequately explain what the author set out to explain? What logic is the theory based on—an economic logic, for example?
- **Is the theory empirically relevant?** What evidence does the author use to develop and test the theory? What further evidence would you use to evaluate the argument? What further testable hypotheses follow from this theory?
- **Is the theory interesting?** How does this argument fit into the literature? What does the study tell us that we didn't already know? What questions still need to be answered?
- **How do the selections we read each week fit together?** How do they fit into the course as a whole? Can we see progress in the research area?

Research Literature Review

- Students will choose a research question in comparative politics with the purpose of conducting a thorough literature review of the scholarship on the subject. Students are expected to read and integrate the bulk of relevant research to date.
- In the review, students should: (1) both organize and summarize the research to date; (2) discuss deficiencies in the scholarship such as significant problems defining concepts or conflicting research findings; and (3) point out gaps in the scholarship and how they might be fruitful areas for further research.
- Students will consult with the instructor regarding the choice of topic and develop a preliminary bibliography as soon as possible.
- The body of the paper should be approximately 10-15 double-spaced pages in length. It should additionally have a bibliography in APSA style and an original title.

Due dates for the research assignment

- The research question due to be posted by **June 10**
- List of sources due **July 1**
- Outline (topic or sentence form) due **July 15**
- Full paper due **August 5**

Final Exam: Students will complete a final exam consisting of one or more essay questions. The exam will be taken during the last week of class. Students are required to complete the exam on their own without collaborating.

Special Accommodations

Accommodations are provided for students who are registered with Disability Services and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact Disability Services (MBSC 111, Phone: 402-554-2872, TTY: 402-554-3799) or go to the website: www.unomaha.edu/disability.

UNO Writing Center

The UNO Writing Center offers free one-on-one consultations with trained consultants to all students, faculty, and staff. Their goal is to help writers improve their writing skills and confidence in all types of writing, in all subject areas, and at all stages of the writing process. For more information about their hours and locations or to schedule an appointment, visit their website at www.unomaha.edu/writingcenter (and/or visit them at their main location in Arts and Sciences Hall, Room 150). I strongly encourage you to consult with the Writing Center both early in the semester as you formulate and organize your ideas for the paper and later in the semester once you have written a draft of the paper.

Academic Integrity

You must maintain academic integrity at all times. Plagiarism/cheating are serious academic crimes, and I will pursue any infringements seriously and actively. At a minimum, any infringement will result in a grade of “zero” on the assignment. For more information on University of Nebraska Omaha policies on academic integrity, please see: <http://www.unomaha.edu/graduate-studies/student-rights-responsibilities.php>.

Late Policy

Work must be submitted by midnight on the scheduled date. For daily/weekly assignments, no late work will be accepted. For major assignments, any paper not turned in by midnight on the scheduled date will be deemed late and assessed a ten percent penalty for that day and a ten percent penalty for every additional late day.

Course Outline

Week One: Welcome and Introduction to the Course

Week Two: The State of Comparative Politics

- LZ Ch.1: Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Paradigms and Pragmatism: Comparative Politics during the Past Decade

- LZ Ch.2: Mark Lichbach, Thinking and Working in the Midst of Things: Discovery, Explanation, and Evidence in Comparative Politics
- Mahoney, James. 2007. "Debating the State of Comparative Politics: Views from Qualitative Research." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(1): 32-38.

Week Three: Theory and Methods

- Lijphart, Arendt. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review*, 65(3): 682-93.
- Bates, Robert H. 1997. "Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30(2): 166-169.
- Coppedge, Michael. 1999. "Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics." *Comparative Politics*, 31(4): 465-476.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 2014. "A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change." *Annals of Economics and Finance*, 15(1): 97-134.

Week Four: Political Culture and Social Capital

- Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jackman, Robert W. and Ross A. Miller. 1996. "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" *American Journal of Political Science* 40(3): 632-659.
- Larsen, Christian Albrekt. 2007. "How Welfare Regimes Generate and Erode Social Capital." *Comparative Politics*, 40(1): 83-101.
- LZ Ch. 6: Mark Howard Ross, Culture in Comparative Political Analysis
- **Research Literature Review Research Question Due this Week**

Week Five: Structuralism, Institutionalism, and Rational Choice

- LZ Ch. 4: Ira Katznelson, Strong Theory, Complex History: Structure and Configuration in Comparative Politics Revisited.
- LZ Ch. 5: Margaret Levi, Reconsiderations of Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis.
- Goldstone, Jack. 2011. "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies." *Foreign Affairs* May/June, 8-16.

Week Six: The State

- Krasner, Stephen. 1984. "Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics." *Comparative Politics*, 16: 223-246.
- Almond, Gabriel, et al. 1988. "Symposium on the Return to the State." *American Political Science Review*, 82(3): 853-900.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 1990. "War and the State in Africa." *International Security* (4): 117-39.
- LZ Ch. 7: Joel Migdal, Researching the State

Week Seven: Political Change: Development, Modernization, and Consolidation

- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1994. The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited. *American Sociological Review*, 59(1): 1-22.

- Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan. 1996. "Toward Consolidated Democracies." *Journal of Democracy*, 7(2): 14-33.
- Bunce, Valerie. 2000. "Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations." *Comparative Political Studies* 33: 703-734.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2009. "Changes in the Causes of Democratization through Time," in Todd Landman and Neil Robinson, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Comparative Politics*.
- **Research Literature Review List of Sources Due this Week**

Week Eight: Democracy

- Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49(3): 430-51.
- Zakaria, Fareed. 1997. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs* Nov/Dec: 22-43.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. 2004. "Why the Rule of Law Matters." *Journal of Democracy* 15(4): 32-46.
- Diamond, Larry. 2002. "Thinking about Hybrid Regimes." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 21-35.

Week Nine: Political Economy

- Vogel, Steven K. 2001. "The Crisis of German and Japanese Capitalism: Stalled on the Road to the Neoliberal Model?" *Comparative Political Studies* 34/10: 1103-1133.
- LZ Ch. 8: Mark Blyth, An Approach to Comparative Analysis or a Subfield within a Subfield? Political Economy
- LZ Ch. 14: Isabela Mares, The Comparative Political Economy of the Welfare State
- **Research Literature Review Outline Due this Week**

Week Ten: Writing week

- Make progress on your Research Literature Review

Week Eleven: Political Violence and Contentious Politics

- Kydd, Andrew and Barbara F. Walter. 2001. "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence." *International Organization* 56(2): 263-96.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75-90.
- LZ Ch. 10: Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics

Week Twelve: Comparative Politics and International Relations: Inter-related Subfields

- Gourevitch, Peter. 1978. "The Second Image Reversed: International Sources of Domestic Politics." *International Organization* 32(4): 881-912.
- Russett, Bruce. 2003. "Reintegrating the Subdisciplines of International and Comparative Politics." *International Studies Review* 5(4): 9-12.
- Kilinc, Ramazan. 2014. "International Pressure, Domestic Politics and the Dynamics of Religious Freedom: Evidence from Turkey." *Comparative Politics* 46(2): 127-145.
- LZ Ch. 9: Etel Solingen, The Global Context of Comparative Politics

- **Research Literature Review Due this Week**

Week Thirteen: Final exam