

Seminar in Comparative Politics*

Political Science 8500-001
University of Nebraska Omaha
Spring 2020

Monday 6:00 pm – 8:40 pm
Arts and Sciences Hall 308

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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 Canvas course site under the Files section in folders for their respective weeks.

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 from other countries of your choosing. By all means explore media sources in the local language of countries you are interested in if you read/speak languages other than English. Comparative Politics is the study of politics around the world, which requires knowing what is happening in the world.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Seminar Participation: 15%
Reaction Papers: 15%
Discussion Lead: 10%
Critical Literature Review: 40%
Final Exam: 20%

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

Seminar Participation: Each student is expected to attend and participate in every seminar.

Reaction Papers: During the course of the semester, each student must write a total of ten reaction papers. Each reaction paper should be roughly one-page in length and single-spaced type (12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins). The reaction papers should have three parts, including a summary of the readings for that week, a discussion of how the readings relate to each other and to previously assigned material, and a critical evaluation of the arguments, evidence, and presentation of the material (see below for more guidance). **Using the Canvas course site's Inbox function (PSCI8500-001), students should email their paper as an attachment to the seminar's listerv no later than 8 p.m. on Sundays.** Every student should read every other student's paper before Monday's class.

Please leave ample time to read the work assigned each week carefully. **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?

Discussion Lead: Each week one student will take the lead in guiding discussion. The student should begin by outlining the major points of the readings (~10-15 minutes) and posing discussion questions for the class, based on the week's material. **The student leading discussion should include their discussion questions for the class in their Sunday email to the class.**

Critical Literature Review: During the semester, you will write a literature review on a comparative politics body of literature of your choosing. You will pose a research question in order to specify the topic of study. The goal of the assignment is to delve into a body of scholarship much more deeply than you can with the few readings on the syllabus each week (or to get into a literature that is not covered in the syllabus at all), so that you will know that literature better and have an opportunity to practice writing a literature review. Choose a

literature you are genuinely interested in and that you may utilize in writing a future paper/article/thesis/dissertation/book.

The full Critical Literature Review is an 11-15 page synthesis of a body of existing scholarship (20-25 peer-reviewed, academic sources—journal articles, books, book chapters) related to your research question of choice. Most of the weeks of this class reflect a “body of scholarship.” Week 6, for example, is a selection of articles dealing with the topic of the state.

For the Critical Literature Review, if you were interested in the state, for example, you might ask a question like, “What explains state failure?” (A country becoming a failed state). Your job with the Critical Literature Review would then be to read scholarship on the state, development of the modern state, state capacity, and failed states and so on. Your task in the literature review is to organize and synthesize the many scholarly sources on the topic—academic books, book chapters, journal articles—especially in light of the competing explanations they provide for your particular research question.

The review should (1) 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.

In terms of discussing individual pieces of scholarship and how they fit together, a literature review should focus on convergence/divergence of ideas and findings among different works. With the example above, you would want to identify and reflect on competing definitions of the state, state capacity, state legitimacy, and so on. Why do authors agree or disagree? What are the problems with existing research? What are the gaps in knowledge?

Writing a good literature review is an essential skill to master, because every paper you write will have one. To reiterate, the goal of a literature review is to organize existing scholarship and to show how new work builds on it. A literature review places new work in the context of existing scholarship and demonstrates how existing scholarship informs a new study. You are also demonstrating to your reader that you have “done your homework” by reading, understanding, and acknowledging work that has come before your own. Individual scholars do not operate in a vacuum; every one’s work is in dialogue with others’ work, and the literature review is a key part of achieving that goal.

Due dates for the critical literature review assignment – for the first three steps, please turn in a hard copy, in class; for the full literature review, please submit your document via the Canvas course site in the Assignments section under “Final Critical Literature Review”

- Research question and literature selection due **Monday, February 3 (Week 4)**
- List of sources due **Monday, February 24 (Week 7)**
- Outline due **Monday, March 9 (Week 9)**
- Full critical literature review due **Friday, May 1 (Week 16), by 4:00 pm CDT**

The Full Critical Literature Review will be 11-15 pages in length (double-spaced, 1” margins, 12 pt Times New Roman font), incorporating 20-25 peer-reviewed, academic sources. See the

APSA Style Guide here for more on formatting here:

<http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf>

Final Exam: Students will complete a final exam consisting of one or more essay questions. The exam will be taken during the final exam week (May 4-7). Students are required to complete the exam on their own without collaborating.

Accessibility Services Center

Accommodations are provided for students who are registered with the Accessibility Services Center (ASC) and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact ASC (Location: 104 H&K, Phone: 402-554-2872, Email: unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu) or go to the website: <https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/accessibility/index.php>.

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

For daily/weekly assignments, no late work will be accepted. For major assignments, papers will be penalized by 5% per day late. For example, a paper that earns an 85% but is one day late would receive a grade of 80%.

Course Outline

Week One (Jan. 13): Welcome and Introduction to the Course

Week Two (Jan. 20): Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No Class

Week Three (Jan. 27): The State of the Comparative Politics Subdiscipline

- 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 Four (Feb. 3): Theory and Methods

- **Research question and selection of literature due**
- 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.

Week Five (Feb. 10): Political Culture and Social Capital

- Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (available electronically via the UNO Criss Library: <https://www.unomaha.edu/criss-library/>)
- Jackman, Robert W. and Ross A. Miller. 1996. "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" *American Journal of Political Science* 40(3): 632-659.
- LZ Ch. 6: Mark Howard Ross, Culture in Comparative Political Analysis

Week Six (Feb. 17): 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 Seven (Feb. 24): The State

- **Literature review source list due**
- 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 Eight (March 2): The "Area Studies" Debate

- Johnson, Chalmers. 1997. Preconception vs. Observation, or the Contributions of Rational Choice Theory and Area Studies to Contemporary Political Science, *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30(2): 170-174
- Lustick, Ian S. 1997. "The Disciplines of Political Science: Studying the Culture of Rational Choice as a Case in Point," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30(2): 175-179
- Hall, Peter A. "Area Studies," *APSA-CP: Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section in Comparative Politics* 8, 2: 22-24

- King, Charles. 2015. "The Decline of International Studies," *Foreign Affairs* July/August

Week Nine (March 9): Political Change: Development, Modernization, and Consolidation

- **Literature review outline due**
- 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*.

Week Ten (March 16): 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 Eleven (March 23): Spring Break – No Class

Week Twelve (March 30): 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

Week Thirteen (April 6): Writing week – No Class

Week Fourteen (April 13): Gender

- Beckwith, Karen. 2010. "Introduction: Comparative Politics and the Logics of a Comparative Politics of Gender." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(1): 159-168
- Caraway, Teri L. 2010. "Gendering Comparative Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(1): 169-175
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A. 2010. "Comparison and Integration: A Path toward Comparative Politics of Gender." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(1): 177-182
- Chappell, Louis. 2010. "Comparative Gender and Institutions: Directions for Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(1): 183-189

Week Fifteen (April 20): Political Violence and Contentious Politics

- Kydd, Andrew and Barbara F. Walter. 2002. "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 Sixteen (April 27): 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

Final paper due Friday, May 1

Final exam during final exam week