This course surveys the major topics in comparative politics and serves as an introduction to the field for Ph.D. students in USC’s Political Science and International Relations (POIR) graduate program. Its purpose is to expose students to key concepts and major theoretical contributions in the field. We will focus on the intellectual evolution of the field, the dominant theoretical debates and controversies, emerging research questions, and the variety of approaches to research within comparative politics. The course proceeds thematically. Important methodological issues in the study of comparative politics are addressed in the context of these substantive topics.

The main objective of the course is to ensure your basic literacy in the field by introducing key questions and exposing you to influential scholarship, both classic and contemporary. In order to complete your education and prepare for your qualifying exams, you will need to take additional courses, regularly read the discipline’s leading journals, and learn about the latest research in the field by attending the Center for International Studies (CIS) workshop, POSC speakers series, and related seminars at the Gould School of Law, Price School of Public Policy, and Marshall School of Business.

**Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:**

- **Reading**: You are expected to read ALL of the readings on the syllabus for each week.

- **Attendance & Participation**: You must attend every class meeting and participate actively in class discussions. In addition, you are required to attend three talks by visiting speakers (CIS Working Paper Series, CIS New Perspectives Series, PIPE workshop, etc). These seminars offer you the opportunity to engage with high-quality current work in comparative politics. (25% of grade)

- **Précis**: Each week, one student will take responsibility for writing an analytical summary that will help you prepare for your qualifying exams. This entails writing an approximately one-page précis of each of the week’s readings. As a guide, your précis should include the following points, when relevant (not all points will be relevant for all readings):
  
  (a) A one-line summary of each reading;
(b) A short paragraph of 3-5 sentences summarizing each reading. This paragraph should succinctly state the explanation that the author provides for the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and the main results/findings. For works that are not empirical, it should summarize the conceptual/theoretical contribution;
(c) The outcome the author seeks to explain (What is the dependent variable?);
(d) The independent/explanatory (and intervening) variables that are central to the author’s explanation (What factors or processes explain the outcome?);
(e) The empirical strategy and data used (Is the work based on a large-N statistical analysis? Does it use comparative historical analysis? Does it test its argument using a field experiment? What are the cases and how were they chosen?);
(f) 2-3 sentences that identify the literatures/debates to which the piece contributes (How does it build on or address other works?);
(g) A short paragraph discussing the main empirical/conceptual strengths and weaknesses of the piece (Is the logic of the argument sound? Are the variables clearly conceptualized? Does the way they are measured make sense? Were the cases well chosen?);
(h) At the end of the précis, include a list of questions that you would like to discuss further in class. Consider: Have the scholarly disputes/debates on this subject been resolved, and what needs further analysis? How do the readings speak to (or past) one another? What remains unclear or worthy of further discussion?

You will post your précis to Blackboard for the group to use as a reading guide by noon on the Monday prior to class.

• Short Memo (2-3 Pages): Write a short response memo focusing on some aspect of the first two weeks’ readings. Exemplary papers propose and defend a thesis that relates to the chosen topic; address anticipated objections to the thesis; and synthesize the relevant literature from the syllabus so that someone who reads the paper but has not read the pieces under discussion would be able to grasp their principal arguments and the evidence employed in supporting them. You may structure this memo following the guidelines provided above for the précis, but it should take the form of an analytical essay with clear logic and flow. This memo is due on February 4, by noon (10%)

• 2 Papers: These two papers will engage with the required reading in the course – providing you with an opportunity to critically, creatively, and systematically analyze theoretical debates. Their purpose is for you to reflect on how the readings address important issues, are flawed in particular dimensions, or can be developed or improved in specific directions. In addition to articulating and defending an original argument, you must also assess the research design and methodology of the studies you analyze.
(a) Each 6-8 page paper should critically engage with at least 6 readings (from a single week or from several, the choice is yours). Please focus on different
topics and readings for each paper.

(b) Your paper should articulate a clear thesis that conveys a comprehensive command of the assigned material, critical evaluation of the readings, and originality of thought.

(c) The first paper will be due March 10, by noon. The second paper will be due April 26, by noon. (20% each)

- Exam: Take home exam in the final week of the course. Answers should be posted by 4pm on Monday, May 6 (25%)

- **Note:** When writing the short memo and papers, keep in mind that these essays should provide an adequate summary of the research being discussed but that the summary should be used as a starting point for an assessment of the research. Though it is essential to show a good understanding of what an author argues, the most important part is this critical assessment. Each paper should deal with a group of works (no fewer than 6 for each assignment). It is important that you touch on several works, even if you give more attention to some, and that you compare the works to each other. Please note that work submitted previously for others courses will not be accepted.

**Course Readings:**
Course readings have been posted to Blackboard, with the exception of those starred (***)), which are available through the Library as ebooks. You may want to buy several of the books listed on this syllabus for your own library. However, it is not required. Note that I have only assigned certain pages of many readings (although longer texts have in some cases been placed on BB); these pages are noted in the syllabus.
**Course Schedule:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>The State</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Modernization and Political Development</td>
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<td><strong>February 4 Short Memo Due (noon)</strong></td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Political Regimes I</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Political Regimes II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>February 20</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>February 27</td>
<td>Political Culture</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Political Institutions</td>
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<td><strong>March 10 First Paper Due (noon)</strong></td>
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<td>March 11-15 Spring Break</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Political Parties, Elections, and Representation</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Nationalism and Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Mobilization, Collective Action, and Social Movements</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Violence, Rebellion, and Revolution</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>April 24</td>
<td>States and Markets</td>
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<td><strong>April 26 Second Paper Due (noon)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Post exam by 4pm</td>
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January 9: Introduction

There are no assigned readings for our first meeting. We will discuss the course requirements, how to approach the readings, and how to write an analytical essay.

January 16: NO CLASS, I am giving a talk in Washington DC

January 23: The State

Definitions of the State


State Formation
Hendrik Spruyt “War, Trade, and State Formation,” The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (2009)***


States and Societies

Joseph Migdal, State in Society (2001), pp. 3-26.***

Further Reading:


January 30: Modernization and Political Development

**Classical Modernization Theory**

**Values-based Modernization Theory**

**Debates about Modernization**
Huntington, Samuel *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-92


**Further reading:**

February 6: Political Regimes I

Socioeconomic and Class-based Theories of Democratization
Barrington Moore. Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, 1968, Preface and skim chapters 7-9 (pp. 413-483).***

Carles Boix. Democracy and Redistribution. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003, Chapter 1


Critiques and Alternative Approaches


Further reading:


Barbara Geddes, “What do we know about Democratization after Twenty Years?,“ Annual Review of Political Science 2.1 (June 1999), pp. 115-144.


Schumpeter, Joseph. Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy.

¹ This is a much distilled version of the influential Transitions from Authoritarian Regimes: Tentative Conclusions coauthored by O’Donnell and Schmitter
February 13: Political Regimes II

Theorizing the Sources of Authoritarian Persistence


Further reading:


February 20: NO CLASS, I am giving a talk at NYU

February 27: Political Culture

*Culture and Political Development*


*Critiques of the Cultural Turn and New Approaches*


March 6: Political Institutions

Overview


Institutional Effects, Institutional Design, Institutional Change


Further reading:


March 20: Political Parties, Elections, and Representation

**Party Systems**


**Voting Behavior**


**Clientelism**

**Further reading:**


Michels, Robert. 1915. Political Parties.


March 27: NO CLASS, I am giving a talk at Vanderbilt

April 3: Nationalism and Ethnicity

*Nationalism and Ethnicity: Definitions and Origins*


*Identity Politics and Public Goods Provision*

Further reading:


April 10: Mobilization, Collective Action, and Social Movements

Collective Action


Mobilization and Opportunity


Further reading:


Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics (1998), pp. 1-38.***


James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (1990), read pages 198-201 first, paying particular attention to the table on p. 198. Then read pp. 17-69 (Chs 2-3).***
April 17: Violence, Rebellion, and Revolution

State Collapse
Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (1979), pp. 3-43.


Civil War


Further reading:


April 24: States and Markets

*States and Markets*


*Political Determinants of Economic Growth*


*Further reading:*

