Political Science 856:  
Field Seminar in Comparative Politics  
UW-Madison, fall 2013  
Thursdays, 1:45 pm-3:45 pm, 422 North Hall (Ogg room)  
See the Learn@UW website for more course information

Professor:  
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Office hours: Tues. 11-12 or by appt.  
https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/yherrera/web/

I. Course Purposes

This seminar is designed to serve five goals:

(1) To acquaint students with many of the leading theories within the field of comparative politics. Students will be made aware of the relevant literatures so that they will be able to connect their own research to broad disciplinary concerns. The weekly topics primarily center on dependent variables, and the readings are oriented toward leading theories (or proposed independent variables) that account for inter-polity or inter-temporal variations on the values of those dependent variables. However, in some cases readings focus on definitions of key concepts.

(2) To provide examples of how best to prepare work for future submission to journals and top university publishers. Papers from the leading journals in the field and books from top publishers are included in the syllabus. Students should also peruse these journals, section newsletters, and publisher lists on a regular basis, not only to keep up with trends in the field, but also to learn the styles and forms of contributions to comparative politics. This is the best way to learn about what Comparative Politics "is" and what the key debates in the subfield are.

(3) To introduce and make students aware of the implications of research strategies. The seminar will emphasize the point that methodologies in the discipline are diverse, and that these methods, once chosen, have considerable import for both topic choice and the range of findings.

(4) To develop among students critical reading, writing, collaboration, and presentation skills. Students will be asked to explain core concepts from the readings to the class, and will collaboratively work on short memos and presentations based on the readings. In addition, students will write an integrated paper connecting readings with their own research interests.

(5) To substantively introduce students to UW-Madison faculty in comparative politics. For most weeks a guest faculty member will join the class discussion.

II. Course Requirements:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and participation in class discussions:</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual explanation of concepts (5 times, 6%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group memo and presentation (3 times, 10%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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(1) Preparation and Participation in Class Discussions:

1. Reading: There is a lot of material and reading is the core activity of the course. The readings are a subset of material from the Comparative Politics prelim reading list, which is available on the Learn@UW website.
   • All students are responsible for completing all readings.
   • All readings will be available on Dropbox or as e-books downloadable in the library.
   • Occasional readings by guest faculty will be added.

2. Participation: This is a discussion-based class and active participation is essential. Mere attendance is not full participation. Active participation means being prepared by doing the reading and thinking about the material so that you can ask and answer questions related to the course material in class.
   • Absences will only be excused due to religious conflicts or medical issues; contact me as soon as possible, should a medical issue or religious conflict arise.
   • Students are expected to attend for the full class period; arriving late or leaving the room during class will result in a lowered participation grade.
   • It is fine to use a laptop in class to take notes, but engaging in other work unrelated to the course during class will result in a lowered participation grade.

Preparation and participation grading rubric:
   A = Attended and actively participated (e.g. raised hand, and seemed in command of readings and material)
   B = Attended and spoke, but without evidence of a high level of preparation
   C = Attended for the full period, each time, but often did not speak
   F = Did not attend

   Note that there is no "D" reflecting the large gap between attending and not attending. Also, there are no A/B or B/C grades, but those liminal grades will appear in the final course grades.
   • There will be one participation grade given at the end of course, rather than individual grades for each class meeting.

(2) Individual Explanation of Concepts:

Each week four to five students, chosen at random, will explain a concept from the week's readings. This exercise is meant to strengthen discussion and presentation skills. Student explanations should be based on mastery of the required reading and will be graded according to the following criteria:

   A = Outstanding explanation of concept, going beyond just description of text and offering original analysis.
   B = Good explanation of concept, demonstrating adequate engagement with the text.
   C = Minimally able to explain or describe concept, but only in the broadest terms.
   D = Unable to explain concept with any accuracy, suggesting a lack of familiarity with the reading.
   F = Did not attend
(3) Group Memos and Presentations:

- To start off our discussions, each week students will work in groups of 2 or 3 to prepare a short memo and a 10-15 minute oral presentation based on the readings. The goal is to highlight interesting aspects of the readings and to provide points for further discussion. Presentations should be modeled on the role of a discussant at a professional conference. Through this activity students will improve their presentation skills and the ability to concisely analyze, categorize, and write about political science literature. Group presentation dates will be set at the first class meeting. Each student will participate in three during the semester, and students should choose weeks from at least two different broader themes (e.g. political economy, institutions, identity, conflict).

Memos should:
- Be in bullet point format, no longer than 2 single-spaced pages (12 point font, 1-inch margins);
- Sort readings into types or categories;
- Highlight key arguments;
- Make connections among the readings;
- Include three discussion questions at the end;
- Be posted on Learn@UW as a PDF by 12:00 pm on the day before the seminar (Wednesday).

Presentations:
- Must include all readings and should not veer into discussion of reading that was not assigned;
- Students should work together to develop an integrated presentation; do not just divide up the reading. All students should be able to discuss all readings, and the division of the presentation should be based on substantive themes or theories, rather than different works;
- Should not include slides, unless there is a figure that needs to be shown;
- Will not be allowed to go past 15 minutes;
- Presenters should engage with the class and not simply read notes.

Grading criteria (includes memo and presentation):
- A = Outstanding analysis of readings, including original or innovative insights in a well-integrated presentation and set of discussion questions, and engaging delivery of material
- B = Made connections between readings, going beyond just description of main arguments, and provided insightful discussion questions
- C = Accurately captured the main arguments or critical points in all of the readings and provided relevant discussion questions, and memo posted on time.
- D = Egregiously inaccurate or incomplete discussion of readings (did not include all readings) or did not provide discussion questions
- F = Did not attend or participate in presentation or memo-writing.
Final project: The final project will be a paper of no more than 2500 words (approximately 6-7 single-spaced pages), including citations. The goal of this paper is to draw connections between readings in the course and your research goals, which hopefully will help you develop your dissertation research question and embed your dissertation in existing literature. You should be considering your own research interests as well as sources for this project throughout the semester. The paper should have 2 sections:

- A discussion of your own research interests (500 words)
- A discussion of two topics from the course that are related to your research interests (approximately 1000 words each).

Project requirements:

1. Title: Give your project a title that describes your research topic. When people ask you "what are you interested in?" or "what do you work on?" this should be your answer.

2. Define a field of interest to you in approximately 500 words. This should describe what you plan to study. Do not just summarize a literature. Say explicitly what you plan to work on within a literature (or literatures), so that the topics in the second part follow from the description of your interests.

3. Choose two theoretical topics (from the 13 substantive course meetings) that are related to your research interests. For each topic, in approximately 1000 words, you should discuss the key questions that the literature in that topic addresses and how existing work, including sources listed on the syllabus, connects to your research interests.
   - In discussing specific sources you should not just summarize main arguments, but instead explain why it is important and what it adds that other readings don’t. You may also explain why certain work or approaches to a question are not applicable to your interests. For example:
     - "This book is a foundational work on state formation, which is well cited in the literature. I disagree with the argument for reasons X, Y, and Z, but think it provides a useful foil for my argument."
     - "This book includes gender, and is the only one on this topic to do so, but it leaves out class, so I want to build on it."
     - "This article links civil society and violence, focusing on decentralization, and is the only one to put those three variables together, and hence is innovative."
     - "This book looks at national identity in Latin America, and I’m interested in Africa, but I thought I could learn from the Latin American experience."
     - "This article has a data set on political violence, which is unique. I want to compare it with some other case studies."

4. Other important requirements:
   - The final project is due as a .pdf posted to Learn@UW on Monday, December 16th, 10:00 am.
   - 12 point font, single-spaced, 1-inch margins, include page numbers.
   - Cite all your sources fully and properly.
   - Title your file that you upload with your name (e.g. "SmithPS856.pdf," not "PS856.pdf");
# Summary of Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Guest Faculty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-Sep</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12-Sep</td>
<td>The State and Civil Society</td>
<td>Michael Schatzberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-Sep</td>
<td>Contentious Politics</td>
<td>Erica Simmons</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-Sep</td>
<td>Social Identities, Culture, and Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-Oct</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Nationalism</td>
<td>Nadav Shelef</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-Oct</td>
<td>Violence and Ethnic Conflict</td>
<td>Andrew Kydd</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-Oct</td>
<td>Regime Types: Definition and Measurement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24-Oct</td>
<td>Regime Types: Explanations of Trajectories</td>
<td>Melanie Manion</td>
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<tr>
<td>31-Oct</td>
<td>Institutions and Institutional change</td>
<td>Nils Ringe</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-Nov</td>
<td>Law, Courts, and Judicial politics</td>
<td>Alexei Trochev</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-Nov</td>
<td>Parties, Voters, and Elections</td>
<td>Noam Lupu</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-Nov</td>
<td>Development and Inequality</td>
<td>Rikhil Bhavnani</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-Nov</td>
<td>Thanksgiving (no class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Dec</td>
<td>Economic Reform and Transition</td>
<td>Scott Gehlbach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-Dec</td>
<td>Political Economy of Developed Democracies</td>
<td>John Ahlquist</td>
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</tbody>
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Class Schedule

Week 1, Sept. 5
Introduction to Comparative Politics:
• No assigned reading.

Week 2, Sept. 12
The State and Civil Society


Week 3, Sept. 19

Contentious Politics


Week 4, Sept. 26

Social Identities, Culture and Gender


Week 5, Oct. 3

Ethnicity and Nationalism


Week 6, Oct. 10

Violence and Ethnic Conflict

Week 7, Oct. 17
Regime Types: Definition and Measurement


Week 8, Oct. 24
Regime Types: Explanations of Trajectories

Week 9, Oct. 31

Institutions and Institutional Change


Week 10, Nov. 7

Law, Courts, and Judicial Politics

Week 11, Friday Nov. 14

Parties, Voters and Elections


Week 12, Nov. 21

Development and Inequality

November 28th, Thanksgiving, no class

Week 13, Dec. 5
Economic Reform and Transition


Week 14, Dec. 12
Political Economy of Developed Democracies