CPO6091: Introduction to Comparative Political Analysis

AUDIENCE: Open to all graduate students. Prerequisites: none.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This is the gateway course to the study of comparative politics at the graduate level at the University of Florida. It exposes graduate students to major trends in the study of comparative politics through a survey of important topics and thinkers. Because of the centrality of these topics and authors to the subfield, it also serves to introduce students to its theoretical and methodological foundations as well.

Like political science itself, the Department of Political Science at the University of Florida is divided into a number of subfields, of which Comparative Politics is one of the largest. Like the larger subfield, Comparative Politics at the UF focuses on the study of domestic politics in countries besides the United States. So, while the United States may be an important case for comparison, the emphasis lies beyond America’s borders.

Over the course of the semester, the seminar will address a wide range of questions and issues. Since it is intended to be an introduction to the subfield, the material covered is by necessity quite broad in date of publication, methods, and scope. The readings range from foundational works to recently published research. Students will engage in debates about the advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies, as well as the validity and generalizability of various hypotheses and theories.

Despite a conscious attempt to cover a wide array of topics, students should be aware that the readings are merely samplings of rich research traditions. Each book or article gives only a taste of what comparativists do. So while the reading load for this course is substantial, the seminar itself is only the first step toward acquiring the knowledge necessary for taking a qualifying examination in Comparative Politics. The department offers a number of additional courses that provide the kinds of depth that an introductory seminar must forego. Successful navigation of the requirements of this course is a first step in establishing a basis to explore comparative politics in greater depth.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

This is a reading and discussion seminar. You need to attend all sessions, arrive on time, and be prepared. We will discuss and evaluate the ideas and concepts presented in the weekly readings. Prior to each session, each student should read and spend time critically thinking about all of the readings for the week. You need to move beyond the undergraduate habit of passing your eyes over the words and declaring an assignment completed. In the case of research this means that you should be able to identify the author’s research question, the strategy devised for answering it, the method(s) and data
used to answer it, as well as assess the validity of the results presented. For more descriptive pieces on the history of the subfield, you should be able to master the content and relate it to the development of the subfield intellectually over time. Prior to class, students should familiarize themselves with the intellectual biographies of the authors we are reading and their contributions to the discipline.

Summary Paper Assignments: Each week several students will be responsible for the summarization of one specific chapter or article in the week’s reading. This assignment entails writing a short summary of the relevant reading (1-2 pages single-spaced). The paper should summarize the major research questions raised by the reading and the major theses of the author(s). It should also, if relevant, discuss the hypotheses framed, the structures of inference and evidence used, and the findings of each piece of research. Papers that raise topics for further discussion, highlight controversies in the literature, critically evaluate the literature, and, if relevant, relate that week’s readings to those of earlier weeks will be seen in a more favorable light.

Summary papers are due the Friday before the week's seminar meeting at 9:00am and should be distributed via email. All participants should read the summaries carefully before the seminar, both to review their own preparation and to think about how the works covered relate to each other. All students are still responsible for doing all the reading each week. Someone else’s notes are not a substitute for your own preparation. These notes will be helpful when you study for your comparative comprehensive exam.

Student participation: Informed and civil participation is an integral part of the seminar’s strategy for learning. Discussion will be structured by the posing of questions by the instructor. Guessing, uninformed answers, and speculation will not help you in my assessment of your mastery of the material assigned and will be apparent to those who are prepared around the table. I expect all enrolled to participate. For those of you who are shy or feel insecure, or for who English is not a first language, this will be more difficult. You can overcome such disadvantages by thorough preparation and turn a potential weakness into a new aptitude.

Policy on attendance: Any absence requires an explanation in advance. An unexcused absence will lead to a participation score of zero for that week and a proportional deduction from the attendance component of your grade.  

Midterm and Final Examination. Both the midterm and the final will be composed of simulated comprehensive exam questions. The former will require you to answer one question and the latter – two. These exams will be an opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned over the course of the semester and will serve to prepare you for the comprehensive exam. These are take-home, open-book assignments. You must work individually on your exam. No collective effort is permitted.

The midterm will be distributed on Friday, October 21, and will be due on Monday October 24. The final will be distributed on Wednesday, December 7 and will be due Wednesday, December 14.

Both the midterm and the final must be turned in electronically at Turnitin. You can find information and register here:
https://guides.turnitin.com/01_Manuals_and_Guides/Student/Student_QuickStart_Guide#Step_1:_Registration. To avoid last minute problems with your first submission, you should register soon as possible. You will need the following information:

- Course Name: Introduction to Comparative Analysis.
- Class id: 13125069
- Password: watagoosiam

**PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATION:** Student performance will be assessed on the basis of attendance and participation in the seminars, written summaries of the assigned readings, a take-home mid-term and a final take-home examination. These responsibilities will be weighted in the following manner.

Midterm Question ................20%
Finals Questions.....................40%
Attendance .........................10%
Participation .......................20%
Summary Papers ...................10%

**POLICY ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. It will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Anyone with a disability should feel free to see me during office hours to make the necessary arrangements.

**POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM:** All students should observe the University of Florida’s standards of academic honesty. In the event that a student is found cheating or plagiarizing, he/she will automatically fail the course and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs and to the Department Chair and Graduate Coordinator for possible dismissal from the program. Acts of Plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or another assignment that was written by someone else (i.e., by another student, by a research service, or downloaded off the Internet);
- Copying, verbatim, a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without properly acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted citation style and using quotation marks;
- Paraphrasing (i.e., restating in your own words) text written by someone else without citing that author;
- Using a unique idea or concept, which you discovered in a specific reading, without citing that work.

**POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** Vagaries of life and scheduling sometimes make the handing in of assignments on time difficult. If students approach the instructor ahead of time and provide a good reason, accommodations may be possible. Such requests should be made prior to the deadline on the assignment. Retroactive accommodation will only be granted in the rarest and direst of cases.

**READINGS:** Several books that you will read in full are available for purchase at the bookstore (Linz, Snyder and Munck, Moore, Lichbach and Zuckerman, Boix and Stokes). All other readings should be
available through the UF libraries either electronically or on reserve. Consult the ARES course page for specifics. Two books are available on line as e-books through the UF library – Lichbach and Zuckerman, Boix and Stokes.

DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: Introduction (August 22)

Session 2: Social Theory and the Origins of Social Science (August 29)


Session 3: Thinking Theoretically and Paradigmatically (September 12)


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Session 4: The Politics of Modernity (September 19)


Session 5: The Political Economy of Development (September 26)


Session 6: State, Society, Power (October 3)


Session 7: State, Society, Power II (October 10)


Session 8: Regimes (October 17)


Session 9: Midterm One (Due October 24)

Library Resources Meeting with David Schwieder (3:00-3:50) in 211 Library West.

Session 10: Institutions (October 31)


Session 11: Contentious Politics (November 7)


Session 12: Regime Change (November 14)


Session 13: Ethnicity And Nationalism (November 21)


Session 14: Political Culture (November 28)


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Session 15: Question Framing or How to Start Thinking about a Dissertation? (December 5)

https://www.apsanet.org/content_12965.cfm


Finals Week: Final Exam (Due December 14).