Course Description

This course provides a critical survey of main theoretical debates and methodological approaches in the field of comparative politics. This strand of research seeks to explain a wide range of political outcomes, including democratization, civic engagement, ethnic conflict, and corruption, by comparing countries or regions so the course draws upon empirical evidence from Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The course begins by examining how such theoretical frameworks as rational choice, political culture, and institutionalism advance our understanding of domestic politics. The next section focuses on the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods in the field of comparative politics. The concluding section unpacks the process of writing an empirical research paper in social sciences.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:
- advance their knowledge of comparative politics literature
- strengthen their understanding of world politics
- design and complete an empirical research project

Course Requirements

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Presentation</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Research Design</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>40 percent</td>
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Participation
Student participation is critical to effective learning. Students are expected to read assigned readings prior to the class and meaningfully contribute to classroom discussions of the material.

Research Presentation
Based upon one’s research for the final paper, each student will make a short presentation and answer questions posed by fellow students.

Midterm Exam
There will be a midterm exam consisting of multiple choice questions and two short essays. The exam will cover the course material, including assigned readings, lectures, and classroom discussions. A make-up exam will be administered only in case of a medical emergency.

Research Design
This assignment is designed to prepare students for writing an empirical research paper in comparative politics. Each student is required to submit a one-page single-spaced summary of the proposed research project. The research design should include a clear statement of the research question and a brief description of research methodology.

Literature Review
The purpose of the literature review is to provide a critical overview of existing academic literature pertinent to one’s research project. The literature review should be the maximum of five double-spaced pages long, including a list of references at the end of the text. Please use the APSA citation style to cite sources and do not exceed the page limits.

Final Research Paper
Each student is expected to write an empirical research paper at the end of the course. The paper should be approximately 20 pages long, using 12-point Times New Roman font. The research paper should be divided into several sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusion. More detailed guidelines regarding this assignment will be provided in class.

Important Dates
October 22  Midterm Exam
November 12  Literature Review due
November 26  Research Design due
December 17  Final Research Paper due

Late Penalty
You are responsible for submitting a hard copy of each assignment at the beginning of the class on due date. Email submissions will not be accepted. Assignments handed in after the class will be considered late. The late assignment will receive a ten percent penalty per each day of lateness.
Required Readings
The course is primarily based upon articles in refereed academic journals. You are responsible for downloading the assigned material through the Blackboard and reading it prior to the class. You are also strongly encouraged to keep track of world politics to draw a stronger connection between political science theories and current events.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 (Sept 3). Introduction

Week 2 (Sept 10). Democracy and Its Alternatives


Week 3 (Sept 17). Rational Choice and Political Culture


Week 4 (Sept 24). Institutions


Week 5 (Oct 1). Political Behavior


Week 6 (Oct 8). The Role of International Actors


Week 7 (Oct 15). The Role of Non-State Actors


Week 8 (Oct 22). Midterm Exam

Week 9 (Oct 29). Writing a Literature Review

Week 10 (Nov 5). Research Design


Week 11 (Nov 12). Writing Lab

Note: Please bring a copy of the literature review for peer review

Week 12 (Nov 19). Quantitative Research Methods


Blair, Graeme, Kosuke Imai, and Jason Lyall. 2013.”Explaining Support for Combatants in Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan.” American Political Science Review 107(4)


Week 13 (Nov 26). Qualitative Research Methods

Note: Research design is due.


Week 14 (Dec 3). No Class (Individual Meetings with the Instructor)

Week 15 (Dec 10). Student Presentations

Week 16 (Dec 17). Wrap-Up Discussion

Note: The final research paper is due.