

**PSCI 8500**  
**Seminar in Comparative Politics**  
**Spring 2017**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

PSCI 8500 is an introduction to the subfield of comparative politics. It is designed to provide an overview of major conceptual, methodological, and theoretical tools used in the advanced study of comparing countries. We will go beyond the US political system and compare many cases from the globe. Original readings are assigned from the major writings in the comparative politics field.

The course consists of three major parts. We first start with the development and survey of the field of comparative politics. Then we will cover the theories and methods of comparative politics with a special emphasis on structuralism, institutionalism, rational choice theory and cultural approach as theories and small-n and large-n studies as methods. Finally, we will study of some significant issues and debates in comparative politics, including the state, democracy, democratization, authoritarianism, party systems, elections, development, political economy, political violence, external sources of domestic change, political culture, civil society, and the role of religion in politics. By the end of the seminar, the students are expected to have clear understanding of comparative politics as a field and be familiar with its theoretical and methodological tools.

This seminar requires extensive reading and writing. It is crucial that students complete the readings before they complete written assignments. The weekly lectures will help the students analytically organize the reading assignments.

This course has the following objectives:

- To prepare students for a research career in comparative politics
- To introduce students to major theoretical approaches and conceptual discussions
- To introduce students to the comparative method
- To provide an overview of a number of current issues and debates in comparative politics.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The following three books are required for the course:

- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, (Cambridge University Press, 1979 [a reprint edition is published in 2015]).
- Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (Princeton University Press, 1993).
- Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail? The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (Norton, 2012).

In addition to these books, there will be reading assignments from scholarly journals. All the additional reading assignments will be drawn from the leading journals of the subfield of comparative

politics. The students will be introduced to the original recourses in the subfield. All the readings will be available online. Students are also required to watch videos and to read news stories that the instructor will assign in the weekly lectures.

### **Make-Up Exams and Incompletes**

I will not allow make-ups without an official documented excuse regarding medical or family emergencies. Please keep in mind that late assignments will be downgraded. An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances (a documented circumstance beyond the student's control). Students will only be given an incomplete if they have been doing passing work during the semester.

### **Code of Conduct**

All students need to acquaint themselves with what constitutes academic dishonesty and the consequences thereof. See the general university policies for further information:  
<http://www.unomaha.edu/aandsaffairs/leftcolumn/inside/students/policiesandprocedures/aiundergrad.php>.

### **Fairness and Disability Statement**

The instructor of this course is committed to support the learning of all students, irrespective of gender, race, age, religion, handicapping condition, or sexual preference. Students should be able to expect that their learning environments are free from any form of prejudice. Disparaging comments aimed stereotypically at any group and any questioning of the seriousness of purpose or academic commitment of students based upon group characteristics may undermine our educational mission. If such behavior occurs in class, students should first talk with the instructor. Identify specific examples of behavior by the instructor or by other students that the student finds offensive or disparaging. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the student is encouraged to consult with the Department Chair and to seek the Chair's assistance in improving the classroom environment.

Students requiring special consideration must contact and work through the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in EAB 117 (554-2872). This office then notifies the instructor in writing of the accommodations the student needs in compliance with 504/ADA.

### **Course Website**

Since this is an online course, it is very important that you familiarize yourself with the Blackboard features. All the course materials, the course syllabus, some of the course readings, lecture notes, and assignments will be available on this website. I may intermittently send course-related e-mails to you via this site. Therefore, you need to make sure that your university email is up and running and that you understand how to use your Blackboard account.

### **Grading**

Your final grade will be based on the following criteria.

#### ***1. Introductory Power Point (2.5 %)***

This is an online course and unfortunately we will not have face to face contacts throughout the semester. However, this course requires engaged discussions as it aims to make you understand the issues of global and comparative politics better. For this reason, we will have discussions throughout the course period. To make the discussions more engaging, it is important to know more about the discussants. For this reason, I require all of the students to prepare a short Power Point presentation

that introduces themselves. This 5-6 slide presentation should include a picture of yourself, your aim in taking this course and other important information that you want to share about yourself with your classmates. The kind of information that you share is up to you but it may include your major, nationality, hobbies, etc. Introductory Power Power is due on **Friday, January 13** and it will worth 2.5 percent of your final grade.

### **2. Discussion Posts (1.25 % each, 12.5 % total)**

The relevancy of this course will become most apparent if you keep up with current events and relate those events to the concepts and theories that we cover in our course. One way to do so is having discussions to understand the global and comparative politics better. Starting the second week of the classes, we will have one discussion in each week (except a few busy weeks for the students) throughout the course period. You are expected to productively contribute to classroom discussions. The discussion will take place on the course web site's discussion forum. Every Monday, the instructor will post a discussion question based on the course readings. The students are required to post a response to the discussion question. Your response will be around 250-300 words. Your response can challenge an argument, raise a counter-argument, support an existing argument with further data, or respond to your friends' responses (if there are any other responses when you're submitting yours). There are 10 discussions to participate throughout the semester. To facilitate your class participation, I encourage you to think critically, and as part of that, to think the positive aspects of the lectures and readings, and to develop your own analysis of the subject. Discussion posts will be due on **Wednesdays (January 18, 25, February 1, 8, 15, March 8, 15, 29, April 5, 12)** at 11:59 p.m. The discussion posts will worth 12.5 percent of your final grade.

### **3. Reaction Papers (5 % each, 30 % total)**

Another way to make students absorb the course materials is to make them write reaction papers that relate course readings with real world events. To do so, starting with the third week of the classes, a reaction paper will be assigned almost every other week throughout the course period. On Mondays, the instructor will post a question that relates the weekly assigned readings to a current event or a video, etc. The students will answer the question by writing a 2-3 page short paper (double spaced). There are a total of 6 reaction papers throughout the semester. The grade will be based on how well you relate course topics with the videos. The students are required to submit their papers to Blackboard's on some **Fridays (January 27, 31, February 10, 24, March 17, April 7, 21)** at 11:59 p.m. The reaction papers will worth 30 percent of your final grade.

### **4. Book Discussion Essay (15 points)**

Throughout the semester, the students will read three major books in Comparative Politics: Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*, Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*, and Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson's *Why Nations Fail*. In the end of the semester, students will be asked to discuss these three books based on a guiding question. The question will require the students to use the concepts, theories, and methodologies that we learn in class. The students are expected to write a 10-page essay (double-space, 12 font). The book discussion essay is due on **Friday, April 28**.

### **5. Exams (20 % each, 40 % total)**

There will be a midterm and a final exam based on the assigned readings and material covered in the class lectures. Each exam is worth 15 percent of your final grade. The exam dates are **March 3**, and **May 5**. Each exam will worth 20 % of your final grade.

*A Summary of Grading Requirements*

<u>Course Requirement</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Introductory Power Point	2.5 %	1/13
10 Discussion Posts	12.5 %	1/18, 25; 2/1, 8, 15; 3/8, 15, 29; 4/5, 12.
6 Reaction Papers	30 %	1/27; 2/10, 24; 3/17; 4/7, 21
Midterm Exam	20 %	3/3
Book Discussion Essay	15 %	4/28
Final Exam	20 %	5/5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 %</b>	

The entire course is worth 100 points:

A+	98-100 points	C	72-76 points
A	93-97 points	C-	69-71 points
A-	90-92 points	D+	66-68 points
B+	87-89 points	D	63-65 points
B	83-86 points	D-	60-62 points
B-	80-82 points	F	0-59 points
C+	77-79 points		

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

### **Week 1 (January 9-15): Introduction**

Mark Blyth, "Great Punctuations: Prediction, Randomness, and the Evolution of Comparative Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 100, 4 (November 2006): 493-498.

**Assignment:** Introductory Power Point Due: Friday, January 13

### **Week 2 (January 16-22): Theory and Methods in Comparative Politics**

Atul Kohli, Peter Evans, Peter J. Katzenstein, Adam Przeworski, Susanne Hoebler Rudolph, James C. Scott, and Theda Skocpol. "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics. A Symposium." *World Politics* 48 (October 1995), 1-49.

Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review*, 65, no. 3 (September 1971), pp. 682-693.

**Assignment:** Discussion Post 1 Due: Wednesday, January 18

### **Week 3 (January 23-29): Structuralism**

Eva Bellin, "Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries," *World Politics* 52, 2 (January 2000), pp. 175-205.

Skocpol, Chapter 1, pp. 3-46.

**Assignments:** Discussion Post 2 Due: Wednesday, January 25  
Reaction Paper 1 Due: Friday, January 27

**Week 4 (January 30-February 5): Institutionalism**

Peter Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms." *Political Studies*, Volume 44, (1999), pp. 936-57.

Acemoglu and Robinson, Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-69.

Putnam, Chapter 1, pp. 3-16.

**Assignment:** Discussion Post 3 Due: Wednesday, February 1

**Week 5 (February 6-12): Rational Choice**

Robert H. Bates, "Comparative Politics and Rational Choice: A Review Essay." *American Political Science Review*, Volume 91 No 3, (September 1997), 699-704.

Putnam, Chapters 2-3, pp. 17-82.

**Assignments:** Discussion Post 4 Due: Wednesday, February 8

Reaction Paper 2 Due: Friday, February 10

**Week 6 (February 13-19): The Culturalist Approach**

Harry Eckstein. "A Culturalist Theory of Political Change," *American Political Science Review*, Volume 82 No 3 (1988), pp. 789-804.

Acemoglu and Robinson, Chapters 3-4, pp. 70-123.

**Assignment:** Discussion Post 5 Due: Wednesday, February 15

**Week 7 (February 20-26): State**

Hendrik Spruyt, "Institutional Selection in International Relations: State Anarchy as Order" *International Organization*, Volume 48 No 4 (Autumn 1994), pp. 527-557.

Skocpol, Chapters 2-3, pp. 47-160.

**Assignment:** Reaction Paper 3 Due: Friday, February 24

**Week 8 (February 27-March 5): MIDTERM EXAM WEEK**

**Assignment:** Midterm Exam Due: Friday, March 3

**Week 9 (March 6-12): Democracy**

David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 49: No. 3 (1997), pp. 430-51

Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy" *Foreign Affairs* (Nov/Dec 1997), pp. 22-43.

**Assignment:** Discussion Post 6 Due: Wednesday, March 8

**Week 10 (March 13-19): Authoritarianism**

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy*, 13, no. 2 (April 2002), pp. 51-65

David Art, "What Do We Know About Authoritarianism After Ten Years?" *Comparative Politics*, Volume 44 No 3 (2012), pp. 351-373.

Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Volume 2 (1999), pp. 115-144.

Valerie Bunce, "Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations." *Comparative Political Studies*, 33 (Aug/Sept 2000), pp. 703-734.

**Assignments:** Discussion Post 7 Due: Wednesday, March 15  
Reaction Paper 4 Due: Friday, March 17

**Week 11 (March 20-26): SPRING BREAK**

**Week 12 (March 27-April 2): Development and Political Economy**  
Acemoglu and Robinson, Chapters 5-15, pp. 124-462

**Assignment:** Discussion Post 8 Due: Wednesday, March 29

**Week 13 (April 3-9): Political Violence and Revolution**  
Skocpol, Chapters 4-7, pp. 163-283.

**Assignments:** Discussion Post 9 Due: Wednesday, April 5  
Reaction Paper 5 Due: Friday, April 7

**Week 14 (April 10-16): Political Culture and Civil Society**

Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *American Political Science Review* 82 (1988), pp. 1203-30.  
Putnam, Chapters 4-6, pp. 83-185.

**Assignment:** Discussion Post 10 Due: Wednesday, April 12

**Week 15 (April 17-23): Religion and Politics**

Ramazan Kilinc, "International Pressure, Domestic Politics and the Dynamics of Religious Freedom: Evidence from Turkey," *Comparative Politics*, Volume 46 No 2 (January 2014), pp. 127-145

Ahmet Kuru, "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles and State Policies toward Religion," *World Politics*, Volume 59 No 4 (July 2007), pp. 568-594.

Eva Bellin, "Faith in Politics: New Trends in the Study of Religion and Politics," *World Politics* 60 (January 2008), pp. 315-47

**Assignments:** Reaction Paper 6 Due: Friday, April 21

**Week 16 (April 24-30): Conclusion**

James Mahoney, "Debating the State of Comparative Politics" *Comparative Political Studies*, Volume 1, No1 (January 2007), pp. 32-38

Symposium, "Perestroika in Political Science: Past, Present, and Future," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 43, 4 (October 2010), pp. 725-54.

**Assignment:** Book Discussion Essay Due: Friday, April 28

**Week 17 (May 1-7): FINAL EXAM WEEK**

**Assignment:** Final Exam Due: Friday, May 5