

APPROACHES to COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Warsaw, May 11- May 24, 2009

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Course Description:

The course is an introductory survey of comparative politics: the study of methods and concepts that are applicable to more than one country in order to test theories about politics. The purpose is to provide an overview of how such comparison is achieved, through an examination of the principal methods, theories, and approaches affecting comparative inquiry. The first part of the course deals with issues related to the comparative method. The second part of the course is devoted to the study of various approaches in comparative politics.

The primary aspects of the seminar are (1) an examination of the most important methods utilized in comparative inquiry: discussion of the merits and problems of the single case study, small-N comparative study, and large-N statistical studies; (2) an overview of the debate concerning qualitative and quantitative approaches in comparative politics, notably whether the same or a different “logic of inquiry” characterizes qualitative and quantitative studies, (3) a critical consideration of the main “meta theories” employed in the understanding of contemporary politics, centering on structural, cultural, institutional, rational choice, and collective action explanations of political behavior, and (4) a conclusion defining comparative politics as distinctive from other subfields in the social sciences.

Through the course we will assess what are the strengths and what is convincing about the diverse methods and approaches of comparative politics, and what are the problems evident in the literature under consideration and why, and (3) what is the linkage between the specific approaches and broader aims in social inquiry.

Course Requirements:

Students’ will be evaluated on the basis of (1) development of skills in the presentation of arguments through participation in class discussion, by means of thoughtful preparation and careful listening to others, (2) the preparation of brief reaction papers to the readings for specific assigned sections, (3) a research design for the final paper that identifies the question to be addressed, identifies the appropriate theoretical literature, outlines the research strategy and relevant evidence to be used in the analysis, and (4) the final paper reflecting the research design proposal.

Course Outline:

DEBATES on COMPARATIVE METHODS

1. Monday May 11, 17:30-20:00 Nature of Comparative Inquiry
2. Wednesday May 13, 17:30-20:00 Comparative Method: Cases & Variables
3. Friday May 15, 17:30-20:00 Comparative Method: Concepts & Evidence

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4. Saturday May 16 17:30-20:00 Structure and Configuration
5. Monday May 18, 19:30-22:00 Political Culture
6. Wednesday May 20, 19:30-22:00 Rational Choice
7. Friday May 22, 19:30-22:00 Institutional Analysis
8. Saturday May 23, 19:30-22:00 Political Behavior
Conclusion

Reading List:

1. The NATURE of COMPARATIVE INQUIRY

Monday May 11, 17:30-20:00

This introductory unit examines the recent debates concerning the scientific nature of comparative politics. The basic themes concern the nature of the “paradigmatic” scientific approach to the social sciences, the nature of comparative inquiry, the diverse practices of the “comparative method,” and the role of theory as potential solution to the issues of comparative inquiry. Definitions and evaluations of the basic theoretical and methodological concepts are examined. Students are to consider how their own “comparative” work fits into the theoretical and methodological practices of comparative politics.

Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago UP, 1962), chaps. 1 and 13.

Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," American Political Science Review 65:3, September 1971, pp. 682-93.

Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry (Wiley, 1970), chaps. 1-2.

Additional References:

Albert O. Hirschman, "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding," World Politics 22:2, April 1970, 329-343.

Atul Kohli et al., "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics," World Politics 48:1, October 1995, pp.1-49.

Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith, and Tarek E. Msoud, eds. Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics (Cambridge UP, 2004).

2. COMPARATIVE METHOD: Cases and Variables

Wednesday May 13, 17:30-20:00

The discussion is build around the influential work of KKV and the claim that quantitative and qualitative studies are subject to the same rules and the same logic of inquiry: causal inference. We examine the controversial, debate around that proposition, looking at the central issues across the qualitative-quantitative divide: the nature of explanation; the possibility of generalization, the notion of causation; as well as case selection, comparability, conceptualization and measurement. Students' task is to formulate a research question for their paper, and outline the most useful method for analyzing the problem.

Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Inference in Qualitative Research (Princeton, 1994), chaps 1, 3

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), chap.1

Gerardo Munck, "Cannons of Research Design in Qualitative Analysis," Studies in Comparative International Development 33, 1998, 18-45.

Additional References:

Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Charles Ragin and Howard Becker, eds. What is a Case? (Cambridge UP, 1992) HM48.W43 1992

James Mahoney, "Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis," Sociological Methods and Research 28:4, May 2000, 387-424.

Stanley Lieberon, "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases," Social Forces 70 (Dec. 1991), 307-320.

Robert W. Jackman, "Cross-National Statistical Research and The Study of Comparative Politics," American Journal of Political Science 29:1, February 1985, 161-182.

Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics (U. of Michigan Press, 2003).

3. COMPARATIVE METHOD: Concepts and Evidence

Friday May 15, 17:30-20:00

The last unit on method concentrates on the formulation and structure of key concepts. We look at the key problem of "concept stretching," the tension between complexity and generalization, and consider classical and alternative modes of concept formation. In addition, we examine the issue of empirical validation: assignment of cases, observations and precision between concept and its empirical validation. Primary aim for students is to identify the main concepts used in their own work, and evaluate the merits of the concepts in terms of complexity versus generalization.

Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics," American Political Science Review 64:4, December 1970, 1033-1053.

David Collier and James Mahon, "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adopting Categories in Comparative Analysis," American Political Science Review 87:4, December 1993, 845-855.
Barabara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," Political Analysis 2, 1990, 131-150.

Additional References:

Gary Goertz, Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide (Princeton UP, 2006).
Douglas Dion, "Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study," Comparative Politics 30:2, January 1998, 127-146 [JSTOR].
Jason Seawright, "Testing for Necessary and/or Sufficient Condition: Which Cases are Relevant?" Political Analysis 10:2, 2002, 178-193.
Robert Adcock and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," American Political Science Review 95:3, September 2001, 529-546.
James Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," World Politics 43:2, January 1991, 169-195.

4. STRUCTURE and CONFIGURATION

Saturday, May 16, 17:30-20:00

We start our examination of the main approaches in comparative politics through the recent "turn to history," the revival of the long standing comparative historical tradition. The basic premise of the structural school is that we must focus on the big questions, huge comparisons by analyzing politics through macro, configurative phenomena, such as state formation, class conflict, or revolutionary struggle. The best method for the investigation of such problems is through a limited number of cases that emphasizes context and historical sequencing.

Ira Katznelson, "Strong Theory, Complex History," in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), pp. 96-117.
Joel S. Migdal, "Researching the State," in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009),
Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, Capitalist Development and Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), chap. 3.

Additional References:

Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), chaps. 7-9.
Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China (Cambridge UP, 1979), pp. 3-43, 284-293.
Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research" in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds. Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge UP, 1985), pp. 3-43.
Erik Olin Wright, Class Counts (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), chaps. 1-2.
Joel Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), chap. 1.

5. POLITICAL CULTURE

Monday May 18, 19:30-22:00

The “renaissance” of political culture as an explanatory phenomenon of contemporary politics reasserts the theoretical importance of subjective meanings to the “objective” claims of structure and the “universal” claims of rational choice. Instead political culture stresses the significance of the provenance of interests or strategies, giving primacy to political values and shared meanings. We explore the interpretive, civic culture, and social construction approaches to political culture.

Marc Howard Ross, “Culture in Comparative Political Analysis,” in Lichbach and Zuckerman, eds. Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure, pp. 134-161.

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Princeton UP, 1963) chaps. 1, 2.

David Elkins and Richard Simeon, "A Cause in Search of its Effects, or What Does Political Culture Explain?" Comparative Politics 11:2, January 1979, 127-46.

Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," American Political Science Review 82:4, December 1988, 1203-1230.

Additional References:

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, 1973).

Robert Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton, 1993),

Ronald Inglehart, Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society (Princeton UP, 1990), pp.3-22

Larry Diamond, ed. Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries (Rienner, 1993),

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy (Cambridge UP, 2005), chaps. 1-3.

David D. Laitin, "The Civic Culture at 30," APSR 89:1, March 1995, pp. 168-173.

6. RATIONAL CHOICE

Wednesday May 20, 19:30-22:00

Rational choice has emerged as the hegemonic paradigm in (American) political science, but has been subject recently to substantive challenges to its basic assumptions and claims. We look at claim of universalism, that everywhere “people make choices in the same way in similar circumstances,” through the lens of foundational axioms of concerning actors, choices, preference formation, and strategic interactions. We also examine the assumptions of equilibrium, bounded rationality, and the introduction of “realistic assumptions.”

Margaret Levi, “Reconsiderations of Rational Choice” in Lichbach and Zuckerman, eds. Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure, pp. 117-133

Jon Elster, “Rational Choice History: A Case of Excessive Ambition,” and Robert Bates et al., “The Analytical Narrative Project” American Political Science Review 94:3, September 2000, pp. 685-702.

Gerardo Munck, “Game Theory and Comparative Politics: New Perspectives and Old Concerns,” World Politics 53:2, January 2001, pp. 173-204.

Additional References:

- George Tsebelis, Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics (California UP, 1990), chaps. 1, 2.
- Robert Bates et al., Analytical Narratives (Princeton UP, 1998)
- Donald P. Green and David Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science (Yale UP, 1994).
- Gary Cox, "The Empirical Content of Rational Choice Theory: A Reply to Green and Shapiro," Journal of Theoretical Politics 11:2, April 1999, 147-170.
- James Mahoney, "Rational Choice Theory and Comparative Method: An Emerging Synthesis?" Studies in Comparative International Development 35:2, Summer 2000, pp. 83-94.

7. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

Friday May 22, 19:30-22:00

The primacy of the classical institutional approach had been eclipsed by the emphasis on political structure, culture and behavior. Yet recently intuitionism has emerged with renewed vigor as an explanatory "variable" in comparative politics. Three distinct variants of the "new institutionalism" reflect the other approaches to politics, in the form of historical, rational choice, and sociological institutional explanations. The main issues concern the origins, the sustainability, and the transformation of political institutions.

- Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," Political Studies 44:4, December 1996, 936-957.
- Kenneth Shepsle, "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach," Journal of Theoretical Politics 1:2, 1989, 131-147.
- Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, eds. Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1-32.

Additional References:

- Douglas North, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance (Cambridge UP, 1990)
- James March and Johan Olsen, Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics (Free Press, 1989)
- Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, eds., The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) chap. 1.
- Elinor Ostrom, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (Cambridge UP, 1990).
- Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics," American Political Science Review 94:3, June 2000, 251-267
- Arend Lijphart and Carlos Waisman, eds. Institutional Design in New Democracies (Westview Press, 1996).

8. POLITICAL BEHAVIOR & COLLECTIVE ACTION

Saturday May 23, 19:30-22:00

The approach confronts some of the core concepts in political science: what constitutes political action; what determines political participation, what are the consequences of political involvement? We examine individual and collective explanations of political behavior, in terms of the determinants, the mechanisms, and the trajectories of political behavior, with an emphasis on the tension between micro and macro levels of analysis.

P.J. Corge, "The Concept of Political Participation: Toward a Definition;" Comparative Politics 20:2, June 1988, 241-9.

Christopher J. Anderson, "Nested Citizens: Macropolitics and Microbehavior" in Lichbach and Zuckerman, eds. Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure, pp. 314-332.

Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics (Cambridge UP, 1994) chaps. 1, 4.

Conclusion:

Gerardo Munck and Richard Snyder, "Debating the Direction of Comparative Politics," Comparative Political Studies 40:1, January 2007, 5-31.

Additional References:

Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments," in Lipset and Rokkan, eds. Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives (Free Press, 1967).

James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (Yale UP, 1990) chap. 2.

Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (Harvard, 1965)

Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Addison-Wesley, 1978)

Phillipe Schmitter, "Modes of Interest Intermediation and Models of Social Change in Western Europe," Comparative Political Studies 10:1, April 1977, 7-38

James Mahoney, "Debating the State of Comparative Politics," Comparative Political Studies 40:1, January 2007, 32-38.

Erik Wibbels, "No Method to the Comparative Politics Madness," Comparative Political Studies 40:1, January 2007, 39-44.

Gabriel Almond, A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science (Sage, 1990)