This is an introductory “core” course in comparative politics, intended for MA and PhD students in political science.

Although every political science graduate program offers a course of this nature, one finds little consistency across these courses. There is no generally recognized canon of Great Texts and no generally recognized textbooks that present the subject matter at a level of sophistication suitable for graduate training. Nor is it clear what “comparative politics” is and how it might be differentiated from political science at large. Therefore, any course that assumes this mantle must make a series of somewhat idiosyncratic judgments about what to include, and what to exclude. Let me briefly explain my choices.

Comparative politics is jokingly referred to as “politics everywhere but the United States.” Nowadays, it is common to regard the US as a case in comparative politics, like Germany, or Uganda. That said, it is a fact that the United States has been more extensively studied by political scientists than any other country in the world. Moreover (and not coincidentally), most wellknown political scientists were born in or live in the US. This means that a good deal of the literature on political science focuses on the US, and to this extent – but only to this extent – we remain tethered to the United States.

I have assumed that comparativists (in contrast to many Americanists) are generally interested in explaining broad economic, social, and political outcomes – preeminent among them, development and democracy. Traditionally, comparative politics has embraced a “macro” orientation focused on institutions rather than individual-level behavior. Of course, every macro-level institution presumes a micro-level mechanism(s). In this sense, the entire social world of causal relations is fodder for comparative politics. However, my focus in this syllabus is on factors that are presumed to instigate societal-level change.

**KEY QUESTIONS**

For each topic listed below on the syllabus we shall be asking a series of fairly standard questions. First, what is $X$, i.e., how is the topic conceptualized and measured? Second, what caused/causes $X$? Third, what does $X$ cause (with particular reference to the quality of governance and developmental outcomes such as growth)? Fourth, how do we know this, i.e., what methodological difficulties are entailed in trying to resolve questions of conceptualization, measurement, and causality? How sure is our knowledge? And finally, what are the un-asked questions? What areas connected with this topic are worthy of attention but as yet unexplored?

**REDUNDANCIES**

A course organized around institutions should, following the dictates of classical logic, treat each
institution separately, one at a time. This is what I have endeavored to do in the following syllabus. Unfortunately, the categories are not entirely mutually exclusive – especially since each institution serves as both cause and effect (being partly exogenous and partly endogenous). This introduces a degree of redundancy into the syllabus. Consequently, some works are listed more than once (and, as a result, the assigned readings is not so heavy as it might at first appear).

EXCLUSIONS
Because of the ambient nature of our subject matter, it is important to clarify what this course does not cover.

Excluded are explicitly methodological topics, since these are covered elsewhere (e.g., in PO840, PO841, and PO843). This course maintains a substantive focus. Of course, any substantive reading begs important methodological questions. If it is argued that Institution X matters for some outcome, one is bound to inquire whether the claim is true, and how one might evaluate it. Thus, methodological issues will be a constant refrain, and students are advised to take PO840 prior to, or concurrently with, this course.

Public policies are not examined as a topic in their own right, in deference to other courses on this subject (PO741). Policies nonetheless constitute a critical dependent variable with regard to the (presumably more exogenous) factors discussed in this course. And, on occasion, they serve as exogenous factors (where “Policies drive politics”); here, they enter the purview of the course.

Campaigns and elections, public opinion, ideology, trust, and individual-level behavior is excluded, except insofar as they might relate to institutions discussed here. (It is my hope that we will be able to launch a 700-level course that covers such topics in the not too distant future.)

International relations (IR), international political economy (IPE), development economics, and growth theory are generally excluded from the course. This is not because they are inconsequential for domestic politics but rather simply because these areas are too complex to fit into the present syllabus and are nicely handled by other courses at BU.

General theoretical frameworks – e.g., rational choice, transaction cost analysis, evolution, relational models, critical juncture/path dependency – are given short shrift in this course. Again, this is not because theoretical frameworks are unimportant, but rather because there seems to be nothing that is specific to “comparative politics” if one takes a more abstract, theoretical view of the subject matter. (Works on some of these subjects are listed at the end of this syllabus, along with various other topics not covered explicitly in the course.) Those interested in learning about game theory/microeconomics should consider taking a course in the Economics department.

GRADES
Your grade for this class will be comprised of two components, equally weighted: (a) participation in class discussion and (b) a final exam.

ATTENDANCE
Since the class meets a limited number of times throughout the semester only one excused absence will be granted. No excused absences, makeups, extensions, or incompletes will be granted without documentation of medical, religious or personal reasons, or for official Boston University business. If you will be missing class for observance of religious holidays you must inform me of these dates during the first week of class.

MINI-LECTURES
I will begin most class meetings with a mini-lecture. Although I generally prefer not to lecture in graduate-level courses, there was some demand for this in the last iteration of the course. We’ll see
how it goes. (I will also try to conclude each meeting with a brief wrap-up of the “take-home” messages, along with a brief glance ahead to the readings for the following week.) In any case, the lectures are intended to supplement, not replace, that week’s readings. Indeed, there is no way that I can present all the important material in lecture format. There is simply too much of it. Nor would it be helpful for me to spoon-feed the information to you. So, make sure that you do the reading carefully (don’t depend on me to synthesize it) and ask questions about subjects raised in the readings that you do not understand. I will endeavor to explain them, or direct you to other resources.

CLASS PARTICIPATION
Whether this course is enlightening or not will depend primarily upon how students contribute to the process. I expect active participation from all students in every session – beyond the mandatory presentations. I do not wish to lecture extensively. Nor do I intend to act as quiz-master, eliciting points. I will play this role if necessary, though I am hoping that the discussants will relieve me of this burden. To reiterate: you must participate regularly in order to get a good grade in this class. Shyness, or unfamiliarity with the English language, is no excuse. This is a talking profession. Yadayadayada. Please be attentive to standard rules of decorum: avoid dogmatism, respect others’ views, and try to move class discussion forward (pay attention to what others say and respond to the previous point).

EXAMS
The final exam will cover everything covered in the course, i.e., all required reading and all in-class discussion. It is a closed-book, closed-note test – just you and the exam. I strongly encourage you to take notes during class and on the readings and to study in small groups for the exams. It will be difficult to pull things together if you have only the readings to fall back on.

READINGS
The reading for graduate courses is extensive; this course is no exception. As it is, we are barely scratching the surface of this vast subject matter. Each week’s reading will probably take you more than one night to get through. Do not wait until the night before to start reading!

Readings marked by a single asterisk are required for the entire class. Usually, these are articles. Sometimes, they are entire books (here you are expected to skim rather than read from cover to cover). Some of the readings are acknowledged classics. We read them because everyone else has read them, even if they are flawed or outdated.

That said, I have generally excluded older classics, i.e., works published prior to 1950. Marx and Weber are cited, but not required. Machiavelli and Hobbes are not even cited. The reason for this is that most students have already encountered these authors, and if they haven’t this is not the place to do so. We simply don’t have the requisite time.

Other readings are chosen because they encapsulate an important position in the literature in a vivid and concise manner. And still others – the majority – are chosen because they offer broad overviews of a large and complex literature.

Most of the required articles can be found on the web. Occasionally, we will need to scan material and post it on the course web site (Blackboard). Let me know ASAP if you experience difficulty finding a particular source so I can straighten out the problem.

Readings that are unmarked are optional. You are not responsible for them, but may wish to peruse them for your own purposes, now or in the future.

Note that the purpose of a long syllabus is to give the reader a sense for the breadth of work that falls within the purview of a given topic. It is not expected that you will be familiar with all of
these. But the syllabus should provide some direction as you continue in the field, especially if you will be taking the comprehensive PhD exams.

**REQUIRED BOOKS**


Evans, Peter B.; Dietrich Rueschemeyer; Theda Skocpol (eds). 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**


**THIS COURSE AND YOUR GRADUATE EDUCATION**

This course is one of a handful you will take at BU as part of your MA or PhD. How much you take away from this course is primarily up to you. Think of it as an opportunity to learn, not simply a hoop that you must jump through. And think of me as a facilitator, not simply your professor. It will be more fun that way, for me and for you.
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
(DATE)

What is “Comparative Politics”?
Preliminary discussion

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT (I)
(DATE)

Modernization Theory
Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven: Yale University Press. [assigned later in the course]

Post-modernization Theory

Misc

Geography


**Resource Curse**


Ross, Michael L. [Book in progress]

**LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT (II)**

*(DATE)*

**Demography; Technology**


Comin, Diego; William Easterly; Erick Gong. 2006. “Was the Wealth of Nations Determined in 1000 B.C.?”


**Trade; Transport; Economic Geography**


Press.

**Human Capital**

**Institutions (transaction cost analysis, property rights)**

**COLONIALISM/IMPERIALISM, DEPENDENCY**

*Misc*
*Angeles, Luis. 2007 “Income Inequality and Colonialism.”* *European Economic Review* 1155-76.
American Journal of Sociology 109, 50-106.

**Hegemony, Dependency, World-systems Theory**


**STATEBUILDING**

(the state as dependent variable)
Statebuilding, State Failure


*Evans, Peter B.; Dietrich Rueschemeyer; Theda Skocpol (eds). 1985. Bringing the State Back In. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [NB ch 1]


32, 341-54.
Widner, Jennifer. 1995. “States and Statelessness in Late Twentieth Century Africa.” *Daedalus* 124:3 (Summer) 129-54.

**GOVERNANCE, STATE CAPACITY, BUREAUCRACY**
*(the state as independent variable)*

See also “Institutions” section (above)

**The Developmental State**


**Misc**


*Evans, Peter B.; Dietrich Rueschemeyer; Theda Skocpol (eds). 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ch 1]*


**Bureaucracy, Public Administration**

*Guest speaker: Prof. Graham Wilson?*


Scott, W. Richard; Gerald F. Davis. 2006. *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural and Open Systems Perspectives*. Prentice-Hall. [a classic textbook; there are many editions]

**Administrative Corruption (see also Clientelism)**


**REGIME-TYPE (Democracy/Autocracy)**

**Conceptualization and Measurement**


**Accountability**


**Premodern history**


**Non-democracy (Autocracy, Dictatorship,…)**


**As Outcome**


**As Cause and Effect**


**As Causal Factor**


Leaders
Humphreys, Macartan; William A. Masters; Martin E. Sandbu. 2006. “The Role of Leaders in Democratic Deliberations: Results from a Field Experiment in Sao Tome and Principe.” World Politics 58 (July) 583-622.

Assemblies and Executives
*Guest speaker: Prof. Doug Kriner?


**Legislatures**


**Coalitions**


**Committees, Cabinets, Small Groups**


**JUDICIARY**

*(DATE)*

*Guest speaker: Prof. David Glick?*


ELECTORAL POLITICS

Electoral Systems
Reynolds, Andrew; Ben Reilly. New International Idea Handbook of Electoral System Design. IDEA. [chs 2-3; skim the case studies]

Political Parties
Guest speaker: Prof. Taylor Boas?
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Federalism**


Local Government


*Kaufmann, Daniel; Frannie Leautier; Massimo Mastruzzi. 2005. “Governance and the City: An Empirical Exploration in to Global Determinants of Urban Performance.” Ms. [you can find various versions of this paper on the web, e.g., http://elibrary.worldbank.org/content/workingpaper/10.1596/1813-9450-3712


General/Theoretical


Bardhan, Pranab; Dilip Mookherjee (eds.). 2006. Decentralization and Local Governance in Developing Countries: A Comparative Perspective. Cambridge: MIT Press.


**Constitutions**

*Comparative Constitutions Project (review) [http://www.comparativeconstitutionsproject.org/](http://www.comparativeconstitutionsproject.org/)*

Elkins, Zachary. In process. *Designed by Diffusion: Constitutional Reform in Developing Democracies*


**THE NEXUS OF INTERESTS AND POLICYMAKING**

(DATE)

**General**

Guest speaker: Prof. Cathie Martin? Prof. Sofia Perez?


Howell, Chris. 2003. “Varieties of Capitalism: And Then There was One?” *Comparative Politics* 36:1 (October).


INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS

DATE

Institutions: Formal/Informal


**Common Pool Resources, Solving Collective Action problems without the State**


**Networks, Political Communication**

**Guest speaker:** Prof. Laurel Smith-Doerr?


**Civil Society, Social Capital, Social Cohesion**


**Clientelism**


**CONTENTIOUS POLITICS**

(DATE)
Social Movements, Civil Conflict, Revolution


CULTURE, IDEAS

DATE

Mise (see also Civil Conflict)
Bednar, Jenna; Scott E. Page. 2006. “Can Game(s) Theory Explain Culture? The Emergence of Cultural Behavior within Multiple Games.” Rationality and Society 18.


**National Identity, Nationalism**


Political Culture

Religion

Ideas, Ideology, Diffusion, Learning

**FINAL EXAM**

(TBA)
ADDENDUM:
LARGE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS
(not covered in this course by reason of time but part of the CP comprehensive exam)

**Theoretical Models, generally considered**
(See also various textbooks on game theory and rational choice.)

**Critical Juncture/Path Dependency/Sequencing**

**Lawfulness & Rationality as a basis for theorizing**


Katzenstein, Peter; Peter Evans; James Scott; Susanne Hoever Rudolph; Adam Przeworski; Theda Skocpol; Atul Kohli. 1999. “The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium.” *World Politics* 48:1 (October) 1-49.


*Wibbels, Erik. 2007. “No Method to the Comparative Politics Madness.” *Comparative Political Studies* 40:1, 37-44.*