Introduction:
Comparative politics has become the biggest subfield within the discipline of political science. It may also be the most (deliberately) disorganized of the subfields. As such, there are many ways of teaching a comparative politics class and organizing a comparative politics core course. Having taught the subject for roughly 15 years and as a co-editor of a book series on comparative politics, I have given tremendous thought to different ways of working within and teaching comparative politics.

There are essential texts, texts that every student of comparative politics should read. Similarly, there are methodological approaches and issues with which all students should be familiar. As I age, I find that there are more and more of all of these things and that the comparative politics core should not be a single content- or even methodology-oriented course but a course for a career. As such rather than work from the perspective of content or methodology (essential works, theories, etc), this course is designed to help you enter in the subfield of comparative politics and to learn how to do comparative politics at a scholarly level. Although familiarity with particular texts and methods is important, the class centers on the building of outlook and skills.

Briefly, as Aristotle noted, inquiry is guided by a sense of wonder. Realistically, you and I have been operating within an environment when wonder is often trumped by deadlines, but we should not lose track of the sense of wonder which drives comparative politics. A brief survey of the interviews in the Munck and Snyder volume (see below) shows how important this is. Wonder will help you see the world and ask questions that will lead you to search out more convincing ways of understanding and explaining phenomena (and, even, non-events). It will lead you to stop reading in the middle of an essay and try to find the source of a quote which moves or troubles you. It will lead you to crumble up many pieces of paper (if you are old like me) or to do whatever the equivalent is with your touchscreen devices.

In addition to building a sense of wonder, the course will try to introduce you to the professional practice of politics. This means the regular intense reading of texts, writing responses, publicly and privately presenting your responses to other colleagues, giving and receiving feedback from colleagues, and reading suggested works and revising texts according to those comments. As such, the course is designed to facilitate deep engagement with texts, broad understandings of a literature, collaborative work, and familiarity with scholarly legacies. All of these are explained in the section on assessment below.
There are five core texts for the course:

Readings for the course are drawn from these as well as other sources.

**Assessment**

As mentioned earlier, the course is designed to build a number of skills and the mechanisms that are part of the assessment of your growth as a scholar are meant to be aligned with those skills.

Two reviews of a single work-

You will do two short reviews centered around a single work. This includes Week 2's review of Moore and Week 6's review of another 'classic text'. This assignment has multiple parts: first, it involves a deep review of a 'great work'; second, it encourages you to think of the mechanics of the work (its concepts, methodology, case selection); third, it asks you to reflect on the personal/professional aspect of the book; fourth, it asks you to answer the four questions that I think are critical in note-taking—preparation for your portfolios and literature reviews; and, for the second review, it asks you to identify a scholarly tree—who has studied under the author.

You, along with a group of 4-5 colleagues, will produce a group portfolio (in Week 8). These assignments have three main objectives: first, to encourage your collaboration with colleagues; second, to have you read and review important peer reviewed journals to learn about research in particular areas; and third, to facilitate an understanding of what journals publish (which does what, how do they organize their issues). Given how fundamental the publication of articles has become, this knowledge is fundamental for someone hoping to enter the field.

You will also produce two literature reviews (week 9-11, and week 14). The first review will be given in draft form to the members of your group by Week 9, you will offer feedback to the members of your group on their literature reviews by Week 10, and you will turn in a revised lit review, the original, and the feedback you received in Week 11. Here there are five main goals: first, get you to consider a work in the context of the literature to which it responds or the work that responds to it; second, to learn how to identify a common thread among disparate works; third, to learn how to offer your work to others for review (learning to accept criticism and to submit it—even if you think it is 'not ready yet'); fourth, to give feedback to peers both because it makes you a responsible colleague and it helps you refine your own analytical skills; and fifth, to learn how to make a revised paper more than a draft with better grammar (this means doing additional reading and whatever revisions appear necessary given the comments you receive).

You will also produce a long literature review (week 14). This work should not only demonstrate your mastery of a number of scholarly works centering on a particular theme, but it should
lead you to finding either a gap (where the scholarship is missing something), a puzzle (something that is under-explained), or to a next step (now that we know X, we can do Y). That is, the literature review should move you in a direction to a future research project (perhaps an eventual thesis). As in the case of the second short review (see above), you will be asked to identify scholars who studied together. This will give you a better idea about why/how scholarly works can be placed together or in contention, and it will also give you insight into different doctoral programs (see the end of this document for some tips).

The two literature reviews will overlap in terms of the basic theme and some of the works considered however your approach for the first one will be more at the level of conceptualization and theory-formation (how sound are these arguments? How do they respond to the problems identified by critics?) and the second one will be much more empirical in orientation (while not a research paper, you will try to establish to what extent different theoretical claims are convincing on the basis of empirical data studied or not considered). Writing each of the literature reviews should help prepare you to think in a more disciplinary way about a possible subject for an eventual thesis.

An important part of scholarly practice is the oral presentation of research in conferences. In order to help prepare for such occasions, you will present the findings of your second literature review to the class in no more than five minutes (also Week 14). This will also help prepare you for NYU's GSAS threesis challenge (see comments below and see the end of this document for some tips).

Finally, you will be assessed for your ongoing participation and contributions to class discussions. Learning is an activity and making the most of this class involves subjects (you, me, your peers) 'making' the most of it. This means being prepared for classes throughout the semester, staying on top of work, and not disappearing as work piles up. If (expected or otherwise) emerge please speak to me immediately.

Therefore, there are multiple means of assessing your progress in the course which aim to address various skills that I believe are critical for new entrants into the field of comparative politics. Once again, the course is not designed to introduce you to the field of comparative politics at a graduate level, but to get you to do comparative politics at a graduate and scholarly level.

How will these assignments be assessed?

- Week two and six reviews (together) 10%
- Group portfolio 5%
- Review #1 including the peer feedback 30%
- Review #2 30%
- Threesis 10%
- Participation 15%

Office hours:

I hold office hours so that I can get to know you, learn where your interests are, and offer advice. You need not make appointments for office hours. The earlier we can speak and get to know each other outside of the class, I have found, the better your experience is with the class. As a result, all students must meet for me in my office hours before week 3. If you are unavailable during my office hours, you must inform me so that we can set up a different time.

**Week One:** The History of the Subfield, Why we do what we do, what do we actually do
The historical, professional, and personal side of the subfield
Landman Chapter One
Munck and Snyder Chapters One and Two

Start reading Moore and one of the following four books:
Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*, Cambridge
Tilly, *Democracy*, Cambridge
Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*, University of Chicago

**Section One:** Concepts, Methods, Approaches and Cross Pollination

**Week Two:** Barrington Moore
All students will read
Moore, Barrington 1968
M&S interview with Moore, Almond, and Dahl
Spanakos 'Writing for Political Science' on spanakos.com

*work due:* Write a review on Moore's text; a) 300 words about the book's use of concepts, methods, approaches; b) 300 words on how convincing his use of empirical data was; c) a 300 word reflection on what the Moore interview reveals about the Moore text; d) two paragraph analytical summary of Moore's text addressing the four questions referenced in the 'Writing for political science' paper.

**Week Three:** Four Texts in Dialogue
Select one of the following:
Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*, Cambridge
Tilly, *Democracy*, Cambridge
Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*, University of Chicago

Week Four: A Comparative Politics Manifesto?
Lichbach 2013

Week Five: Methods and Case Selection

L&Z 1,9, 10 Lichbach/Zuckerman
Landman Chapters 2-5


**Week Six:** Creative Confrontations and the four questions
Students must read one of the following works

Almond and Verba, Civic Culture and/or Civic Culture Revisited
Dahl, Polyarchy
Linz Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes
Linz and Valenzuela The Failure of Presidential Democracies
Huntington Political Order in Changing Societies or The Third Wave of Democratization
Lijphart Patterns of Democracy,
O'Donnell, Counterpoints,
O'Donnell, Schmitter, Whitehead, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule Vol 4 and others
Scott Weapons of the Weak or Seeing Like a State
Linz and Stepan Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation
Stepan Rethinking Military Politics
Stepan and Taylor Boundaries of Toleration
Przeworski Democracy and the limits of Self-Government or et al Democracy and Development
Bates When Things Fell Apart, Prosperity & Violence, Marketss and States in Tropical Africa
Collier and Collier Shaping the Political Arena
Laitin Hegemony and Culture or Nations, States, and Violene
Skocpol States and Social Revolutions

new(er) classics
Acemoglu and Robinson Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy
Berman, The Primacy of Politics
Centeno Blood and Debt, or Democracy within Reason or State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: Republics of the Possible
Englebert Africa; Unity, Sovereignty, and Sorrow
Finer, SF. The History of Government
Kalyvas The Logic of Violence in Civil War
Kohli State Directed Development
Mertha The Politics of Piracy: Intellectual Property in Contemporary China or China's Water Warriors; Citizen Action and Policy Change
Ostrom Governing the Commons
Schaffer Democracy in Translation
Slater Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia
Stasavage States of Credit or Public Debt and the Birth of the Democratic State
Tilly Coercion, Capital and European States or Democracy or The Politics of Collective Violence
Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India
Wedeen Ambiguities of Domination
Zheng, Yongnian The Chinese Communist Party as Organizational Emperor

work due: Write a review of the selected work: a) 300 words about the book's concepts, methods, approaches; b) 300 words about the use of empirical data; c) if the author is interviewed in the M&S text a 300 word reflection on what the interview reveals about the text if NOT then a 300 word comparison with the Moore text; d) two paragraph analytical summary of the text addressing the four questions referenced in the 'Writing for political science' paper; e) identify at least three scholars who studied under the author of your text or connect your author with three other scholars who studied under the same scholar.

Week Seven: Concepts and Approaches

All students should read:
Lichbach and Zuckerman Chapters 1-4
Spanakos and Panizza 2015, Chapter 1 and the Epilogue
M&S interview with O'Donnell

Students must read one chapter from each of the following books:
O'Donnell, Guillermo 1999, Counterpoints
Spanakos and Panizza 2015
Week Eight: Making Literature Reviews

All students should read

Prepare group portfolio (see below)
Read at least two other review essays from a recent issue of Perspectives
Read whatever materials are relevant for your short literature review (for next week)

Group portfolio: In groups of 4 or 5, you will put together a portfolio of annotated notes. Each group member will review (answering each of the four questions identified earlier in the semester) for four works (one from each of the following three categories). Please make sure to put your initials at the bottom of each review.

a) American Political Science Review or the British Journal of Political Science. Each group will focus on one volume meaning that all of the articles in the APSR reviewed by group one will be from 2013, those of group two from 2012, and so on.

b) Comparative Politics or Comparative Political Studies. Because these journals are exclusively journals of comparative politics, students should select a specific issue (eg vol 20, issue 3) and cover the majority of its contents.

c) Polity or Studies in Comparative International Development, or Journal of Development Studies. Like the APSR and BJPS, these journals include papers from different subfields, so students should select the essays reviewed from a particular volume.

d) a regional journal (say, Latin American Politics and Society) or a themed journal (Third World Quarterly). These journals are somewhat interdisciplinary and so the students should select essays from a particular volume.

Section Two: Between Concepts and Empirics

Week Nine: Economic Development and Democracy (I)

Landman Chapter 6
M&S interview with Przeworski

Przeworski et al Democracy and Development
Lipset Political Man

Work due: Draft of literature review #1
Literature review #1
Length: 5000-6000 words
Possible subjects: democratization, enduring authoritarianism, economic crisis, economic development, state capacity and state-building, civil war, human rights, secularization, decentralization and federalism, institutional design and change, participatory politics, social movements
Remember, this review will address primarily some of the most important issues on the side of ideas,
concepts, and methods. Your second review will tackle the same basic topic but will aim to examine empirical application in greater depth.

*Remember* - *a literature review is an intellectual endeavor but it is primarily a matter of organization. Be clear about what the organizing thread for your review is and what general point you are trying to make by reviewing these works.*

**Week Ten:** Economic Development and Democracy (II) and from Feedback to Drafts

Read either:
Panizza, Francisco and George Philip *Moments of Truth* 2013
Carstensen in Spanakos and Panizza,

Or
Bates, Robert, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*

All students should read the
M&S interview with Bates

Read one of the following:
Dunning, Thad *Crude Democracy*
Boone, Catherine *Property and Political Order in Africa*

**Work due:** Feedback
Students should send electronic feedback on the first literature reviews to the members of the group. You should feel free to comment on the writing and make editing comments. However, what is most important is to offer a critique which will help your classmate’s improve their literature reviews. Your feedback for each paper should be between 400-600 words.

**Week Eleven:**

State and Society and Governance
Students should read one of the following:
Forster, Till and Lucy Koechlin *The Politics of Governance*
Engelbert *Africa: Unity, Sovereignty & Sorrow*

All students should read
M&S interview with Scott
L&Z ch. 8 Migdal
Forster in Spanakos and Panizza

Students should familiarize themselves with
*Foreign Policy Failed State Index*
World Bank- Governance Indicators

**Work due:** Revised literature review #1, original literature review, and received feedback
You will turn in a packet with your original literature review, all of the feedback comments from your group members, and then your revised literature review (in that order).
**Week Twelve:** Contentious Politics, Transitions, and Revolutions

Landman 7,8, 9  
Baskan and Nyiri in Spanakos and Panizza  
M&S interviews with Skocpol, Laitin  
L+Z ch 6 McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly

Read one of the Following  
Skocpol *States and Social Revolutions*  
Baskan *From Religious Empires to Secular States*

**Week Thirteen:** Institutions and Democratization  
Landman 10  
Select at least two of the following:  
Landman, Schmidt, Benton, Panizza, and Muriaas in Spanakos and Panizza

Linz and Stepan  
Linz and Valenzuela  
Linz on Legitimacy  
O'Donnell  
M&S interviews with Linz, Stepan

**Week Fourteen:** Final  
*In class:* Five-sis Challenge  
The NYU GSAS runs a 'threesis' challenge every year for MA students. In it, students present their thesis to a multidisciplinary group of judges in no more than three minutes. This exercise requires confidence, oral (and somatic) communication skills, mastery over a subject, and brevity! To help prepare you for this (and life where people rarely want to listen to the 8000 word version of your argument), you will present the findings of your second literature review in no more than five minutes.

Things to consider:  
1) The threesis audience is comprised of scholars from different disciplines so you must be careful not to assume too much familiarity with political science language and theories  
2) Because they may not share your interests, you need to communicate a sense of wonder to them, why is what you are studying interesting  
3) In your threesis you present a thesis, not a literature review, so there should be a clear argument or hypothesis  
4) Introduce yourself, your topic, and your argument clearly  
5) Make sure you communicate clearly to your audience  
   a. Do not speak too quickly  
   b. Do not move through themes too quickly  
6) Let your audience have some insight into you personally  
7) Be aware of the limitations imposed by time and do not try to do too much

*Work due:*  
Literature review, 7000-8000 words
This review should address the same basic theme (though the argument and organizing principle will probably be very different) but should aim to understand the empirical application of the ideas and theories set forth in a specific area (how viable is concept A? does theory be truly explain real world cases? Etc)

Appendix- trace the professional careers of each of the 5 authors who appear most in your literature review

To consider when writing a literature review
A literature review is an attempt to organize disparate scholarly work around a single theme or issue. Three organizational methods are demonstrated below.

Obviously, the organization of disparate literature represents a contribution to scholarship. However, I would like to see something that goes beyond organization and makes assessment and an argument. You need not have the amount of empirical evidence that would be expected in a research paper but you should still have some argument to orient the literature review.

Development of literature- here the literature review focuses on how scholars have modified their study of a specific issue over time (e.g. early literature focused on transitions to democracy, then there was a shift to questions of what prevents democratic reversibility, and then there was a shift to evaluating the quality of democracies that were not likely to turn into authoritarian government but were still “lacking” in some way)

Theoretical problem- here the focus is on something that is primarily a scholarly concern (how should genocide be defined. (e.g. scholars from school A have argued 1, 2, and 3 while scholars from school B have argued, scholars from school A generally base their positions on analysis of cases p, q, and r, while those of school B do so with cases r, s, and t, this makes the study of recent research on r especially important….)

Empirical problem- here the literature review collects scholarship that addresses something that is primarily an empirical concern (the ongoing militarized conflict in country p [countries p, q, and r] raises serious concerns with the inadequacy of efforts to resolve conflict, strategies 1, 2, and 3 have been employed to resolve the conflict but none have been wholly successful and recent scholarship from A, B…. F show why 1 has failed outright, 2 has been partially successful, and 3 can only be helpful when it is pursued in conjunction with 4 and by external actors)

To consider when presenting for the Threesis Challenge

Who is the audience?
The audience is made up of professors who are not necessarily experts in political science nor on the subject you are addressing. So avoid jargon and be clear about meaning when you are using a concept or term that is not used in typical conversation.

Why should the audience care about what you are studying?
Start with wonder. Identify a puzzle, some counterintuitive situation, or something that simple confronted yours (and presumably their) assumptions of how things are/should be.

Why should the audience care about you?
Introduce yourself and give some evidence about why this matters to you (provide some personal narrative and, in the process, some of yourself).
How should you communicate?
Speak slowly. It is more important that the audience understand you than that you cover everything.

Three minutes?
This is a very serious time constraint, particularly since you are speaking about a very long research paper. Know your limitations and do not try to cover too much ground. It is better to convey some depth rather than to go through each of the various sections of your thesis.

Outcomes?
A thesis is not a literature review but an effort to advance a scholarly argument which will be defended by evidence. Presentations are more successful when you have some response (evidence/outcome) to the puzzle you address in the beginning of your presentation. It is far more convincing to say “the role of international financial institutions in resolving the debt in country A turns out to be more positive than expected” than to conclude by wondering whether “popular criticism of IFIs was justified.”