1. Course Description

This seminar is the second in a two-course sequence that aims to introduce students to some of the central topics, concepts, and questions in the field of comparative politics, with an emphasis on developing countries. The course is designed to familiarize students with the field as it stands today, and will focus on relatively recent contributions. This course does not pretend to cover the most important, “seminal” or “foundational” articles and books in the field. We will focus on the “frontier” of research being done on the politics of developing countries by political scientists, economists and scholars from other disciplines. The most important goal of the course is to stimulate students curiosity, to give a broad overview of the range of methodological approaches that can be used to tackle challenging questions, and to motivate students to identify areas where there is potential for making a contribution to the discipline. However, students specially interested in comparative politics should become familiar with the more classical, foundational articles and books throughout their Ph.D. program.

We will not focus on any specific region of the world, and the course will not be structured around area studies. Rather, throughout the semester, we will analyze substantive topics that are central to understanding the politics across the developing world, including: the importance and origins of institutions, democratic and authoritarian regimes, the role of the state, political representation and accountability, clientelism, and political violence.

2. Course Requirements

This course is organized as a weekly workshop followed by a reading seminar. The class is designed to be highly participatory. Therefore, it is essential that students attend both the workshop and seminar and come to class fully prepared to discuss the required weekly readings. Students must submit the day before each session, one page with comments or questions based on the required readings. This must be done via NYU Classes. We will circulate all the comments amongst all class participants such that we can all prepare for the discussion.

Each week, a student will be assigned to serve as discussant during the workshop. The seminars will be structured around the in-depth discussion of two papers per session. Rather than present or summarize the paper, the student must provide a critical assessment of the arguments and findings in the paper. We will then have an open discussion and discuss potential avenues for future research.
The number of discussions per student during the semester will depend on the number of students enrolled.

Students must also submit a research proposal on April 20th. This must be a concrete proposal on a research paper. It should include a motivation and contribution to the literature, data sources and empirical strategy. These research proposals will be circulated amongst all class participants. During the last 2 sessions of the semester, we will all discuss each proposal and provide feedback.

The distribution of grading is as follows:

- Participation in class and discussion memos: 30%
- Presentations: 30%
- Research proposal 40%.

Schedule of Readings

All readings marked with a “(*)” or a “(**)” are required and you should read them carefully. Your weekly one-page memo will be based on these readings. Each reading marked with a “(**)” will be discussed by a student in each class. Students are encouraged to bring particular readings of interest to our attention, and to make suggestions of any kind about the syllabus. We may adjust the syllabus and the required readings throughout the semester.

Week 1: January 24 - Introduction: Theory and Method in Comparative Politics


Additional Readings:


Week 2: January 31 - Institutions and Colonial Legacies


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Additional Readings:


Week 3: February 7 - Democratization

Speaker: Adele Grompone

- Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006a (Chapters 1, 2 and 6) (*)
- Ben W Ansell and David J Samuels. *Inequality and democratization: an elite-competition approach*. Cambridge University Press, 2014 (Chapters 1 and 2) (*)

Additional Readings:

Week 4: February 14 – Authoritarian Politics: Power-Sharing and Survival

Speaker: Gwyneth McClendon


Additional Readings:


Week 5: February 21 - Hybrid Regimes: Actors

Speaker: David Szakonyi (confirmed, Jordan Center)


Additional Readings:


- Leopoldo Fergusson, Pablo Querubin, Nelson Ruiz-Guarin, and Juan F. Vargas. The Real Winner’s Curse. Unpublished Manuscript, 2018


Week 6: February 28 - Hybrid Regimes: Institutions

Speaker: Daniel Corstange


Additional readings:


Week 7: March 7 - Development without Representation

Speaker: Cyrus Samii


Additional readings:


**Week 8: March 14 - Spring Break (No Class)**

**Week 9: March 21 - - Institutions of Representation and Development**

Speaker: Aila Matanock


Additional Readings:


**Week 10: March 28 - Breakdown of Democracy**

Speaker: Mark Beissinger


Additional readings:


- Matt Singer. Delegating away democracy: How good representation and policy successes can undermine democratic legitimacy. *Comparative Political Studies*, forthcoming


**Week 11: April 4 - Clientelism**

Speaker: John Marshall


Additional Readings:


- Cesi Cruz, Philip Keefer, and Julien Labonne. Incumbent Advantage, Voter Information and Vote Buying. Unpublished Manuscript, 2015


Week 12: April 11 - The State

Speaker: Didac Queralt


Additional Readings:

- Jeffrey Herbst. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press, 2000 (Read Chapters 1, 2 and 5)


- James Fenske. Ecology, trade, and states in pre-colonial africa. forthcoming *Journal of the European Economic Association*


**Week 13: April 18 - Political Violence**

Speaker: Yuri Zhukov


**Week 14: April 25 - Discussion of Research Proposals I**

Speaker: Martin Rossi

**Week 15: May 2 - Discussion of Research Proposals II**