This seminar will introduce students to the study of state formation and political development in comparative-historical perspective. The course will focus on answering whether and to what extent historical trajectories shape contemporary political and policy outcomes around the world. Some questions motivating this course include (but are not limited to): What is “the State,” really? And where do states come from? What sort of institutional features characterize states? Why are some states better at collecting taxes and providing public goods than others? Why does nationalism and ethnic identity emerge as a more potent feature of politics in some countries than in others? What accounts for cross-national differences in corruption in politics? How do historical legacies shape patterns of political inclusion, democracy and economic inequality over time? The course covers different regional contexts, from Europe and Latin America to Sub-Saharan Africa but also explores the United States as a “comparative” case study. By the end of the course, students will be able to analyze the causes and consequences of a range of political outcomes through the lens of state formation.

While the seminar is oriented around political science scholarship, including behavioral and political economy approaches, students will also wrestle with macro-historical and sociological perspectives to understanding the rise of states and political transformation around the world. The course structure is organized around three interconnected phenomena: 1) the rise of the modern nation-state, 2) the development of state institutions (i.e. the census, mass education, tax regimes) and state capacity, and 3) how these institutions shape politics to this day. The end of the course will focus on the normative implications of the relationship between state formation and political development.

Course structure: Each weekly meeting will be 2.5 hours in length. In the first part of the class, the instructor will spend 30-45 minutes presenting the literature and existing knowledge about the week’s topic to motivate discussion. We will then discuss the required reading assignments for about 45 minutes followed by a short 5-minute break. After the break, we will reconvene to hear and discuss student presentations.

Course evaluation: The grading of student performance will be based on the following components:

- **Class participation and presentations (50%).** Each meeting will cover a set of papers and book chapters. Typically, and when possible, the readings will include one or two theoretical

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1 This seminar revisits classic readings on core topics and questions of comparative politics that students may have studied in other courses. As the adage goes, to know where we’re going we have to know where we’ve been. However, the bulk of readings will be drawn from more recent scholarship.
(less “scientific”) readings that are foundational and one or two more applied readings (e.g., “scientific”) leveraging statistical and/or qualitative evidence on a puzzle/outcome related to the week’s topic. Students are expected to discuss the readings listed as “Required.” Each student will have to make one 10-20 minute long in-class presentation about the reading materials listed in the syllabus as “Presentation.” The presentations will be allocated based on the number of students taking the class and the difficulty/length of the assigned papers. In addition, your grade in this component will depend on your weekly participation in class discussions. While formally not required, students are strongly encouraged to read the articles assigned for presentations even if they are not presenting.

- **Analytical essay and proposal memo (50%)**. You will be asked to write one 10-page essay. The essay should consider one particular problem related to the reading materials covered in the class and discuss the problem from the point of few of a certain case-study. Can the theories you learned explain some puzzling phenomenon in a particular historical or current case? What is missing in the given theories? Could we make informed/educated predictions about political developments in the analyzed case on the basis of the knowledge that you have accumulated? How much do theories of state formation and political development matter to addressing your puzzle versus more general institutional and behavioral principles of political science? In the middle of the semester, students will submit a one-page memo on their proposed essay topic. The essay will be due on the last meeting of the semester where each student will give a brief presentation on their essay topic followed by questions and a brief discussion.

**Conceptualizing the State and its Origins**

**Week 1. Introduction and Course Overview – January 28**

**Week 2. Fundamentals and Theoretical Approaches – February 4**
What is the State? What is State Formation? What is Political Development? Why should we care about studying these topics and integrating them in 2019?

Required:


**Week 3. Violence and State Formation – February 11**
The Fiscal-Military Foundations of Modern States

Required:


Presentation:


Week 4. Nations, Nationalism, and Political Identity – March 10

Required:


Presentation:


Module 2: State Capacity and Institutions

Week 5. Fiscal Capacity: Taxation – February 18

Required:


Presentation:


Week 6. Information Capacity: The Census – February 25
Required Readings:


Presentation:


**Week 7. Education – March 3**

**Proposal Memos Due In-class**

**Required:**

Green, Andy. 2013. *Education and State Formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA*. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 82-114, 170-203


Presentation:


**Week 8. NO CLASS - March 17 (Spring Recess March 16 – 22)**

**Module 3: Political, Social, and Economic Outcomes of State Formation**

**Week 9. State Formation and Democratization – March 24**

**Required:**

**Presentation:**


**Week 10. Economic Development – April 7**

**Required:**


**Week 11. Public Goods, Social Welfare, and Inequality – March 31**

**Required:**


**Presentation:**


**Week 12. Crime and Corruption – April 14**

**Required:**


Presentation:


**Module 4: Unpacking State Formation and Political Development in the U.S.**

**Week 13. Historical Foundations of U.S. Political and Economic Inequality – April 21**


Presentation:


**Week 14. Geographies of Political Culture in the U.S. – April 28**


Presentation:


**Week 15. Presentations – May 5**

Depending on enrollment, each student will give a presentation briefly summarizing their analytical essay for 5-10 minutes while other students note questions they may have during discussion. The remainder of the meeting will be open for questions.