Political Behavior in Developing Countries
Graduate Seminar
New York University, Spring 2021

Class Time: Tuesdays, 2pm-3:50pm
Location: Zoom

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Office Hours: email for appointment.
Zoom room for office hours:
https://nyu.zoom.us/j/2268281870
Meeting ID: 226 828 1870, +16465588656

Course Description:
This seminar aims to introduce students to topics in the study of comparative political behavior, with a focus on cutting edge research that has been conducted in developing countries. We begin by examining core ideas in behavioral research (e.g., about cognitive biases, socialization, emotions, personality, social identity). We then turn to examine how these ideas have been applied to the study of political behavior in various domains.

The course is not designed to teach particular methods; however, the readings cover a range of different research designs and data gathering strategies, and in some meetings, we will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to research. A principal goal of the course is to help students engage with current debates in the study of political behavior. A second goal is to help students explore and develop possible topics, theories and approaches for their own research. By the end of the semester, students should have an appreciation for the diversity of issues and approaches that can be found in the study of comparative political behavior, and should feel they have a base of knowledge to “stand on” as they move forward as scholars and teachers in this field.

Course Materials:
Most materials for the course will be available electronically, through the course’s My Classes website (under “Resources”). All listed readings are required.

Note on “Blended” Class Format:
NYU has scheduled this course to have in-person and online components. Because students are located all over the world (and thus on different time zones), and because they may have different vulnerabilities to COVID-19, and because there are pedagogical downsides to having some students in the room while others are not, I propose to conduct all sessions over Zoom unless there is significant student demand to do otherwise. I will survey enrolled students at the start of the semester.
Course Requirements

Regular Discussion Participation:
The class is a reading seminar; **regular, engaged participation** from all students is crucial. Students must attend class meetings having read all required readings and prepared to discuss.

Presentations:
Each student is required to give **two presentations** during the course of the term. **One presentation** will involve the student presenting on “the big idea,” theory or theoretical perspective in one of the assigned readings for that week. The student should present the big idea, argument or concept, argue for its importance, and discuss its relationship to other big ideas/concepts/arguments covered in the course. **The other presentation** will involve a student presenting on the research design and empirical analysis in one of the assigned readings (which may be the same or different reading than the subject of the first presentation). The student should present the nitty-gritty aspect of the design, argue for how the design helps answer the paper’s big question(s) and prepare to defend the design as if he/she were the author. Students will be asked only to **prepare slides** for these presentations, not to write separate memos. During the ensuing discussion with the class, presenting students will be asked to **take the perspective of the author** when considering questions and comments on either the “big idea” or design. Together, these two types of presentations are meant to compel students to get used to thinking **both about how they can advance big debates and situate claims in the literature and about how to design and execute rigorous research.** Each student will be expected to complete both types of presentations during the course of the term.

During the first class meeting, we will divide up the weeks and readings among students so that each student has two occasions during the semester to present. We will also discuss the format/content of the presentations in the first class meeting.

Prospectus/Research Design:
The other main graded assignments for the class will be a **short paper prospectus** (2-3 pages, due halfway through the semester) and a **final research design** (~15 pages) that presents a design the student might be interested in executing, e.g., for his/her second year (MA) paper, MA thesis or 3rd year qualifying paper. Please email or meet with the professor at least one week before submitting the short paper prospectus in order to get some feedback on the idea.

Regular class participation – **20%**

Two in-class presentations
- One report: present the “big ideas” in the assigned reading, act as the author to answer critic’s questions – **15%** (email slides to the professor before start of class)
- The other report: present the empirical approach and evidence in the assigned reading, also take the position of the author – **15%** (email slides to the professor before start of class)

Prospectus (2-3 pages, double-spaced, due Thursday, March 18 by email by 5pm) – **15%**

Research Design (fifteen pages, double-spaced, due Tuesday, May 11 by email by 5pm) – **35%**
Late Policy
Work will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours period in which it is late. Exceptions will be made in only the rarest of circumstances (e.g., medical emergencies) and must be requested as soon as the conflict becomes apparent. Incompletes can be taken at the end of the semester in consultation with the professor but are strongly discouraged.

Academic Integrity
See the NYU Citation Guide for information on how to properly cite sources.

Course Outline

February 2. Intro. What is the Study of “Political Behavior”? Why Study It? Do We Learn Different Things by Studying It in Developing Countries?


PART I. BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS

February 9. Cognitive Biases


February 16. Socialization


**February 23. Emotions**


Aldama, Abraham, Mateo Vasquez, and Lauren Young. “Fear and Citizen Coordination Against Dictatorship.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*.

**March 2. Personality**


**March 9. Social Identity**


March 16. Incentives and Preference Formation


RESEARCH DESIGN PROSPECTUS DUE BY 5PM THURSDAY, MARCH 18

March 23. Do Political Elites Behavior Differently Than Ordinary Citizens?


PART II. APPLICATIONS

March 30. Effects of Media Exposure


April 6. The Contact Hypothesis


April 13. Political Participation


April 20. Electoral Behavior and Accountability


April 27. Legacies of Violence


May 4. Sharing Research Designs/Discussing Future Research Directions

RESEARCH DESIGNS DUE: May 11th