PO-540  
Comparative Politics  
Fall 2011  
Syllabus  

Instructor: Gamze Çavdar (Yaşar)  
Class Hours: Thursday, 3:00 pm-5:50 pm  
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 11:00 am-12:00 noon/app.  
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Course Description:  

This graduate seminar is an introduction to the subfield of comparative politics. It is designed to provide an overview of major conceptual, methodological, and theoretical tools used in the advanced study of comparing cases. Original readings are assigned from the major writings in the comparative politics field. Although the reading list aims to prepare Ph.D. students for their comprehensive exams, students need to go beyond the list for sufficient preparation.  

The course consists of four major parts. The first part introduces the intellectual roots of the field—that is, the contributions of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. The second part discusses the development of the field of comparative politics, including its distinct characteristics—or the lack thereof—and its major methods. At the same time, students will be able to discuss some epistemological questions, including to what extent the social science knowledge has accumulated, the question of objectivity and incommensurability, and the paradigm shift. The next part discusses major theoretical approaches associated with the study of comparative politics. For clarity, we will be following the classification of M. Lichbach and A. Zuckerman—rationality, culture, and structure—with some modifications. The last part gives an overview of some issues and debates, including the state and state-society relations, democracy and democratization, enduring authoritarianism, social movements, and the role of religion in politics. By the end of the seminar, the students are expected to have clear understanding of comparative politics as a field and be familiar with its theoretical and methodological tools.  

This seminar requires extensive writing and reading. It is crucial that students complete the readings PRIOR to class meetings every Thursday and come to the discussions with a number of questions to raise. Attendance is mandatory.
Objectives:

- To prepare students for a research career in comparative politics
- To introduce students to major theoretical approaches and conceptual discussions
- To introduce students to the comparative method
- To provide an overview of a number of current issues and debates
- To help prepare Ph.D. students for their comprehensive exams in comparative politics

Requirements and Grading:

1. **Weekly Papers (40%)**: Each student will write a paper (3-4 pages; 12-point Times New Roman) that comments on the questions provided for that week.

   The paper questions appear at the end of each topic listed below. Make sure you understand the question before starting to write the paper and send me an e-mail if you need clarification. A good paper must 1) demonstrate that the readings have been completed and understood; 2) critically and thoughtfully discuss the question at hand; 3) be clear and concise; 4) be formal; and 4) use academic language, proper citation, and essay format. For consistency, I will require you use the *APSＡ Manual of Style*, which is available online.

   Papers are due by 2:00 pm on Thursday every week. Electronic submissions are required. You can submit by logging into RamCt (Mailbox) and sending me your paper as an e-mail attachment. Any alternative way should be discussed with me ahead of time. If your paper attachments are not in my mailbox every Thursday by 2:00, the paper grade will drop by one letter for each day the paper is late. I will not accept any paper after three days.

   Paper deadlines are not suggestions; they are meant to be followed. Make sure you allow yourself enough time to submit your paper before the deadline. Plan ahead; anything that might go wrong will go wrong.

2. **Participation and Class Leadership (20%)**:

   Each student will sign up at least for one topic and be responsible for leading the discussion. In preparing for your leadership role, make sure you go beyond discussing each individual reading. Take a holistic approach. It is crucial that you lead the discussion toward more general questions by asking 1) what are the main assumptions, arguments and premises of the approach; 2) what are some alternative ways of answering the questions at hand; 3) what makes this approach different from the previous ones covered; 4) whether this theory is helpful in answering the questions it promises to answer, etc. Every student is responsible for preparing a set of questions (at least 15) and sending it to the entire class two days before the class (Tuesday). Providing an analysis of the readings along with the questions is highly recommended.
Participation is an integral part of this seminar. For an active participation, I would recommend that you do not wait to complete the readings until the very last day. Many topics we cover require careful thinking and going over several times. Also, remember, in order to participate, you have to attend class (I will take attendance). However, mere attendance—like participation with less than thoughtful and informed comments—does not by itself bring any participation grade. Your participation must be active and be based on the readings assigned. The quality of your participation, as well as the quantity, matters.

Exam: (40%) A comprehensive and open-notebook exam will take place on the date specified in the University schedule.

To complete this course, students must complete all required assignments.

The schedule below lists the minimum readings we will examine every week. Of course, I reserve the right to add, delete, or replace readings as we go along.

Assignments and Grading Criteria:

Of the total 100 points,

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Readings:

Books for Purchase:


Schedule of Classes, Readings and Assignments

PART I: BACKGROUND

Topic 1: Introduction
August 25
Readings: No readings assigned

Topic 2: Marx
September 1
Readings:

NO CLASS MEETING DUE TO APSA CONFERENCE: PLEASE E-MAIL ME YOUR PAPERS.

Suggested Readings:

Paper Question: Can the proletarian class “choose” not to be exploited? Why/Why not? Explain the materialist foundations of the concept of “exploitation” according to Marx. 3-4 pages. Deadline: September 1st by 2:00 pm. (See further instructions for weekly papers above)
**Topic 3: Durkheim and Weber**  
**September 8**  
**Readings:**


**Suggested Readings**


**Paper Question:** Discuss the theories of capitalist development according to Max Weber and Karl Marx. Your argument should explicitly present and meticulously discuss these alternative explanations for the emergence of capitalism. Where does Capitalism get us in the end? Explain. 3-4 pages. Deadline: September 8th by 2:00 pm.

**PART II:**  
**STATE OF THE FIELD, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND METHODS**

**Topic 4: State of the Field**  
**September 15**  
**Readings:**

- James Mahoney, “Debating the State of Comparative Politics: Views from Qualitative Research,” *Comparative Political Studies* 40, 1 (January 2007): 32-38. (RamCt)

**Paper Question:** Identify three distinct phases in the development of the comparative politics field. Explain the distinct characteristics of each phase and why it came to an end, if it has in fact ended. What are some of the characteristics of the current state of the field? 3-4 pages. Deadline: September 15th by 2:00 pm.
**Topic 5: Epistemology**  
**September 22**  
**Readings:**

- Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics* (Routledge, 2003), 3-45. (RamCt)

**Paper Question:** How do you know you are right? How do comparativists know about the validity of their arguments? Do they? 3-4 pages. Deadline: September 22nd by 2:00 pm.

**Topic 6: Case Studies**  
**September 29th**  
**Readings:**


**Suggested Readings for Part II:**


**Paper Question:** By reviewing past issues of some leading comparative politics journals, identify sample articles that have used the following methods in their research: small N, large N, and statistical comparisons, and the most different and most similar cases. Once you locate the relevant articles published, just copy and paste their abstracts (or type the abstract if it is not available electronically). No page limit. Recommended journals are...
PART III: COMPETING PARADIGMS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Topic 7: Structural Approaches and the Macro-Analytic Political Economy: Class, States and Regimes

October 6

Readings:

- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 3-43. (RamCt)
- James Caporaso and David Levine, *Theories of Political Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Intro., Chapters 1, 6-9, Conclusion, pp.1-32, 126-226. (RamCt)
- Eva Bellin, “Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries,” *World Politics* 52, 2 (January 2000), pp. 175-205. (RamCt)
- Fernando Henrique and Enzo Faletta, Preface to the English edition of *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). (RamCt)

Suggested Readings:


Paper Question: Identify various versions of structural analysis and explain in what ways they differ from each other. Pay special attention to the role, if any, agency plays in their conceptualizations. Deadline: October 6th by 2:00 pm.
**Topic 8: Political Culture**

**October 13**

**Readings:**

- Lane Ruth, “Political Culture: Residual Category or General Theory,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 25, 3 (1992). (RamCt)

**Suggested Readings**


**Paper Question:** Identify and discuss the weaknesses and strengths of political culture
Deadline: October 13th by 2:00 pm.

**Topic 9: Rational Choice and Micro-Analytic Political Economy**

**October 20**

**Readings:**

- George Tsebelis. *Nested Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Chapter 1 and 2. (available online)


**Suggested Readings:**


**Paper Question:** Is a rational choice approach compatible with any of the other approaches we have discussed so far? In what ways does it differ from the previous approaches? In what ways is it consistent? Illustrate the consistencies and inconsistencies with concrete examples of research from your readings in this class.

**Deadline:** October 20th by 2:00 pm.

**Topic 10: Institutionalism**

**October 27**

**Readings:**

Paper Question: After comparing and contrasting old institutionalism with rational choice and historical versions of new institutionalism, explain each new institutionalist school’s explanation for institutional change. Which explanation is more plausible? Why? Deadline: October 27th by 2:00 pm.

PART IV: ISSUES AND DEBATES

Topic 11: The State and State-Society Relations
November 3
Readings

- Theda Skocpol, "Bring the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in Bringing the State Back In, eds. Peter Evens, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3-37. (RamCt)
- Joel Migdal, State in Society. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-37. (RamCt)

Suggested Readings:


Paper Question: Has the heightened interest on studying the state made the society-centered explanations irrelevant? Why/Why not? Deadline: November 3rd by 2:00 pm.

Topic 12: Democracy and Democratization
November 10
Readings:

- Charles Tilly, Democracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3.

**Suggested Readings:**


**Paper Question:** What would be an alternative to the transitology literature’s tendency to locate undemocratic regimes on a continuum between totalitarianism and liberal democracies? What would this alternative approach take into account in examining non-democratic regimes other than identifying their regime types? Deadline: November 10th by 2:00 pm.

**Topic 13: Enduring Authoritarianism**

**November 17**

**Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**Paper Question:** Why do authoritarian regimes survive despite their poor performance? Identify some competing explanations for regime survival and trace their theoretical origins by considering the theoretical approaches we have learned so far. Deadline: November 17th by 2:00 pm.
November 24: No Class—Holiday

**Topic 14: Social Movements**

**December 1**

**Readings:**

- Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). (all)

**Suggested Readings:**


**Paper Question:** Identify at least three main arguments made by Sidney Tarrow in his book, *Power in Movement Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, and respond to them from a political economy perspective (macro-analytic political economy). Your paper is expected to identify the weaknesses in Tarrow’s book and discuss the implications of your critique for social movements. Make sure you go over the required and recommended readings, if necessary, listed for the political economy section to construct your argument. 3-4 pages. Deadline: December 1st by 2:00 pm.

**Topic 15: Religion and Comparative Politics**

**December 8**

**Readings:**

- Eva Bellin, “Faith in Politics,” *World Politics* 60 (January 2008): 315-47. (RamCr)
- Sheri Berman, “Ideas, Norms, and Culture in Political Analysis,” *Comparative Politics* 33, 2 (January 2001): 231-250. (RamCr)
Suggested Readings:


**Paper Topic:** Which issue would be a potential topic for your dissertation/thesis? Explain the reasons why you find this particular topic interesting. Which theory would be best suited for your topic? Why? What does this theory explain that others cannot? Deadline: December 10th by 2:00 pm.

**Final Exam:** December 14
11:50 am-1:50 pm