

PLSC 778: Comparative Politics – Research Design
Spring 2021

Instructor: Professor Elizabeth Nugent
Email: elizabeth.nugent@yale.edu
Office Hours: TBD

Seminar Hours: T 1:30-3:20pm
Taught over Zoom

Course Description

This course is the second in a two-semester sequence designed to introduce political science doctoral students to the study of comparative politics. This half of the sequence focuses on research design and methodology in comparative politics. Most of our weekly discussions will focus on one full book paired with excerpts of a second book or article as exemplars of a particularly interesting or important research design. The course will be helpful for students who plan to take the comparative politics field exam and write a comparative politics dissertation.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected in all seminars. Please communicate absences ahead of class when possible. If you accumulate three unexcused absences, you will receive no more than half credit for participation. This is a synchronous seminar course, and will satisfy the “in person” requirement for those needing it for student visa purposes. Because of room capacity rules in light of COVID-19, if you need to attend in person, please contact me for approval.

E-mail Policy

If you have a quick (i.e. non-substantive) question, email is the best way to contact me. While I typically respond to emails quickly, please allow 48 hours for a response. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, follow up with a reminder. This article is recommended reading about how to draft an effective email: Laura Portwood-Stacer, [“How to Email Your Professor \(without being annoying AF\).”](#)

If you email me the night before a deadline with a last minute request, please do not expect a response. It is important that you look at the assignments early to ensure I can answer any questions you may have in a timeframe that is useful to you. Longer questions -- for example, those dealing with your performance in the course or substantive questions about the course material -- are better asked in person. I will hold regular office hours throughout the semester, and appointments can also be made on an individual basis.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

For every day a written assignment is late, you will lose 1 point. No final papers will be accepted after May 17 without prior permission. Familiarize yourself with [Yale University's policy on incomplete grades](#), and please communicate with me early if you believe you will pursue an incomplete for the term.

Academic Integrity

Familiarize yourself with Yale University's policy on academic integrity. In short, don't turn in the same paper for two classes, don't plagiarize someone else's work, and don't cheat on assignments. When in

doubt, come talk to me. Review [Yale University's Definitions of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Documentation of Sources](#) to ensure that you do not accidentally violate Yale's academic honesty policies.

Commitment to Diversity

Your experience in this class is very important to me. If you have already established accommodations with the [Resource Office on Disabilities](#), please communicate those to me as early as possible so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through ROD, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), please contact ROD. ROD offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, me, and the ROD.

Commitment to an Inclusive Learning Environment

Yale University adheres to the philosophy that all community members should enjoy an environment free of any harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, or violence. If you encounter sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability please contact the Title IX Coordinator, [Stephanie Spangler](#), or [any of the University Title IX Coordinators](#). You may also report an incident to me. I am required to notify the Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident, though you may choose to request confidentiality from the University.

Grading and Assignments

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- 20 points of your grade will be determined by attendance and participation

The class is a seminar, and the quality of a seminar hinges on the quality of discussion. Regular attendance and participation are important for understanding the material and for getting the most out of this course. Students are expected to come to class having completed all assigned readings and prepared to talk about them in depth. This may require you to prepare notes, individually or in a group, to remember and understand important aspects of the readings.

When reading for this class, pay special attention to the research design, evidence, and empirical tests in each reading. What is the empirical approach adopted by the author? How does the author justify their choice of a specific research design and methodological approach? What is the author's argument or theory? Is the empirical analysis a clear test of the theory? Are there additional or alternative empirical tests you think would be more appropriate? Do you find the empirical analysis to be sound, or are there problems with the evidence, models, and methods employed? Do you agree with the interpretation of the author's empirical analysis?

We will spend the first 15 minutes of each class discussing the Comparative Politics Workshop paper (when scheduled). Your contributions to this discussion will count toward your participation grade. Ideally, everyone in this class will also attend the Comparative Politics

Workshop on Tuesdays from 12-1:20pm. If a required scheduling conflict makes this impossible, you are still required for reading the paper before our class on Tuesday afternoon.

- 20 points of your grade will be determined by an in-class facilitation during weeks 3-10

You will be expected to provide a brief (five minute) introduction to the reading(s) covered for that day, introduce a number of questions to guide our conversation focused on the research design of the assigned pieces, and lead us in discussion for the first half of class (until 2:30, when we will take a 5 minute break). Please sign up for a slot [here](#).

- 30 points of your grade will be determined by three response papers

You are required to write three short response papers (3 pages maximum) on weeks assigned to you by the professor between week 3 and 10. Each paper is worth 10 points. **Responses papers are due through Canvas by 8 pm on the Sunday before the class.**

- 30 points of your grade will be determined by an alternative research design

You are required to write an alternative research design for a comparative politics book published in 2015 or later (and not included on the syllabus!). Peruse the comparative politics reading list for ideas. The assignment is further broken down as follows:

Assignment 1: Select the book and summarize its main findings and research design.

- 3-5 pages
- 5 points
- **Due March 16 through Canvas by 1:30pm**
- Note: You should address the strengths and weaknesses of the book's research design, and speculate about why the author chose their research design (drawing on the text where appropriate).

Assignment 2: Present your alternative design in class. Start with a summary of the book's argument and research design, then present and justify your alternative design. Includes slides in your presentation.

- 12-15 minutes
- 10 points
- **Presentations will be scheduled for April 27 and May 4 during class**
- Note: You will develop your own research strategy for addressing the book's main question(s) and evaluating hypotheses. You should clearly address the strengths and weaknesses of your alternative design.

Assignment 3: Submit a final research design that summarizes the book's argument and research design, and then presents and justifies your alternative research design.

- 12-15 pages
- 15 points
- **Due May 17 through Canvas by 5pm**

- Note: The first 3-5 pages should not be the same text as assignment 1. The final paper must reflect feedback you have received from me and your peers in previous assignments and from your presentation.

Course Materials

All article-length readings are available through Canvas. Please purchase the books listed below, as we will read them in full. They are available through the Yale Bookstore and online retailers.

Required Books

1. Boix, Carles. *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
2. Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier. *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).
3. Grzymala-Busse, Anna. *Rebuilding Leviathan: Party Competition and State Exploitation in Post-Communist Democracies* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
4. McClendon, Gwyneth. *Envy in Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2018).
5. Nugent, Elizabeth R. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition* (Princeton University Press, 2020).
6. Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press, 1993).
7. Scott, James. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1985).
8. Slater, Daniel. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
9. Wedeen, Lisa. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Each week, we will pair a full book with selections from a second book. All required selections will be posted to Canvas. However, these texts are important for the comparative politics comprehensive exam, and you may want to purchase them and read them in full.

Recommended Books

1. Arjona, Ana. *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).
2. Kitschelt, Herbert, et al. *Latin American Party Systems* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
3. Magaloni, Beatriz. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
4. Pop-Eleches, Grigore and Joshua A. Tucker. *Communism's Shadow: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes* (Princeton University Press, 2017).
5. Posner, Daniel N. *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
6. Svobik, Milan. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
7. Wilkinson, Steven. *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge University, 2004).
8. Wood, Elisabeth. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Schedule and Topics of Class Meetings

1. February 2
Introduction to Course
 2. February 9
Comparative Politics Research
 3. February 16
Cross-National Studies
 4. February 23
Sub-National Studies
 5. March 2
“Single Case” Studies
 - March 9
No Class; Break in Academic Calendar
 6. March 16
Historical Studies
Assignment 1 due to Canvas *before* class
 7. March 23
Ethnographic Studies
 8. March 30
Formal Models Studies
 9. April 6
Experimental Studies
 10. April 13
Mixed Method Studies
 11. April 20
From Prospectus to Book
 12. April 27
Student Presentations (I)
Assignment 2
 13. May 4
Student Presentations (II)
Assignment 2
- Assignment 3 due to Canvas by *5pm Monday, May 17.***

Assigned Readings

Please read all required texts before the class session for which they are assigned. Recommended texts include related readings (many from the comparative politics reading list) relevant to the week's topic.

1. February 2

Introduction to Course

Required

1. Munck, Gerardo L., and Richard Snyder. 2007. *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 11, and 13.
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2. February 9

Comparative Politics Research

Required

1. Ragin, Charles. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press: 1-84.
 2. Przeworski, Adam. 2007. "Is the Science of Comparative Politics Possible?" in *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix & Susan C. Stokes. New York: Oxford University Press.
 3. Bernhard, Michael. 2009. "Methodological Disputes in Comparative Politics." *Comparative Politics* 41.4: 495-515.
 4. Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 1.
 5. Bates, Robert H. 1997. "Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30.2: 166-169.
 6. Sartori, Giovanni. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 64:4: 1033-53.
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3. February 16

Cross-National Studies

Required

1. Slater, Daniel. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Selections from Herbert Kitschelt, et al. 2010. *Latin American Party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended

1. Achen, Chris. 2005. "Let's Put Garbage Can Regressions and Garbage Can Probabilities Where They Belong." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22.4: 327-339.

2. Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95.3: 529-47.
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4. February 23
Sub-National Studies

Required

1. Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. Selections from Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended

1. Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36.1: 93-110.
 2. Pepinsky, Thomas B. 2019. "The Return of the Single-Country Study." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 187-203.
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5. March 2
"Single Case" Studies

Required

1. Scott, James. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
2. Selections from Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended

1. Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44.4: 823-30.
 2. Gerring, John. 2012. "What is a Case Study" and "What is a Case Study Good For?" in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* ed. John Gerring. New York: Cambridge University Press, 17-64.
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6. March 16
Historical Studies

Assignment 1 due to Canvas *before* class

Required

1. Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier. 1991. *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press.
2. Selections from Pop-Eleches, Grigore and Joshua A. Tucker. 2017. *Communism's Shadow: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Recommended

1. Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers. 1980. "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22.2: 174-197
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7. March 23

*Ethnographic Studies*Required

1. Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
2. Selections of Elisabeth Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Recommended

1. Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books: 3-30.
 2. Wedeen, Lisa. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 2010: 255-272.
 3. Wood, Elisabeth J. 2007. "Field Research" in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. C. Boix and S. C. Stokes. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
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8. March 30

*Formal Models Studies*Required

1. Boix, Carles. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Selections from Svobik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended

1. Munck, Gerardo L. 2001. "Game Theory and Comparative Politics: New Perspectives and Old Concerns." *World Politics* : 173-204.
 2. Little, Andrew T., and Thomas B. Pepinsky. 2016. "Simple and Formal Models in Comparative Politics." *Chinese Political Science Review* 1.3: 425-447.
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9. April 6
Experimental Studies

Required

1. Gwyneth McClendon. 2018. *Envy in Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98.4: 529-545.

Recommended

1. Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2, 3, 4.
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10. April 13
Mixed Method Studies

Required

1. Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2007. *Rebuilding Leviathan: Party Competition and State Exploitation in Post-Communist Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Selections of Wilkinson, Steven. 2004. *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended

1. Collier, David and Colin Elman. 2008. "Qualitative and Multimethod Research" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford University Press: 779-795.
 2. Brady, Henry & Collier, David, eds. 2000. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Berkeley, CA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
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11. April 20
From Prospectus to Book

Required

1. Nugent, Elizabeth R. 2014. *Post-Authoritarian Political Arenas in the Middle East: Legacies of Authoritarian Party Systems*. Dissertation prospectus, Princeton University.
2. Nugent, Elizabeth R. 2017. *The Political Psychology of Repression and Polarization in Authoritarian Regimes*. PhD dissertation, Princeton University.
3. Nugent, Elizabeth R. 2020. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Recommended

1. Germano, William. 2014. *From Dissertation to Book*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.