

## **Seminar: Comparative Political Analysis**

### **I. COURSE SUMMARY**

This seminar has two purposes. First, it introduces graduate students in comparative politics to current methodological standards. Second, it requires students to develop their own research design that meets those standards.

### **II. REQUIREMENTS**

Weekly assignments are noted below. A research prospectus (one in the mode of a 15-page description of research that is standard for NSF proposals) that sums up the work done throughout the quarter on your research question will be due at the end of exam week. The prospectus will be graded on the quality of thinking that went into the project rather than the proposed theory or the significance of the statistical results. Before writing the final prospectus, students are advised to read Przeworski, Adam and Salomon, Frank "The Art of Writing Proposals". This is available on-line at [http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/general\\_information/](http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/general_information/). Before handing in your final assignment, you will have an opportunity to present your prospectus, and defend it, before a group of advanced graduate students.

The success of the seminar will depend on your preparedness to discuss the assigned readings and to offer comments and feedback on each other's work, as well as the amount of effort you invest in advancing your own research agenda. We have made the reading load light intentionally so that: (1) you take the time to look back at readings from 440A and 440B to identify material that can illuminate methodological issues under discussion; (2) you commit to advancing your own work and supporting the work of others with thoughtful comments and criticisms.

### **III. BOOKS TO PURCHASE**

Gary King et al, Designing Social Inquiry [referred to in syllabus as KKV]  
Barbara Geddes Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research  
Design in Comparative Politics

Thomas Kuhn The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

McCarty, Nolan and Adam Meirowitz (2007). Political Game Theory. (optional)

## IV. WEEKLY MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Week 1: Introduction to the Course: Lines and Circles in the Study of Comparative Politics

#### **Background Reading:**

David Laitin, "Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline" in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, State of the Discipline (New York: Norton, 2002).

KKV, chapter 1

Barbara Geddes, Paradigms, chap. 1, and pp. 27-35

Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune (1970). Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry. New York: Wiley. "Introduction," 3-13.

Thomas Kuhn The Structure of Scientific Revolutions chaps. IV, VI, and IX

Lichbach, Mark I. and Alan S. Zuckerman (1997a) eds. Comparative Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press), see esp. Lichbach, Mark I. And Alan S. Zuckerman (1997b) "Research Traditions and Theory in Comparative Politics: An Introduction" in Lichbach and Zuckerman (1997a), 3-16.

"Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models (EITM)." Report of the Political Science Program, Directorate For Social, Behavioral And Economic Sciences, National Science Foundation Together With Additional Commentaries and Supplementary Documents. Read Part II, and the comments offered by Alt, Freeman and McKelvey in Appendix B.

### Week 2: The Comparative Method at Work: Testing for Observable Implications of Theories

#### **Background Reading:**

Geddes, Paradigms, 37-40

Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune (1970). Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry. New York: Wiley. Chapters 1-4.

Robert Bates et al. "Introduction" to Analytic Narratives pp. 3-22.

John Ferejohn "Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Elections in Early Stuart England" in K. Monroe, ed. The Economic Approach to Politics

### Week 3: Political Theory and Comparative Politics

**Assignment:** Choose a research question from a theory that (a) you read for PS 440A/B or another political science course; (b) you think is important; (c) you think is inadequate in explaining variance; (d) you have an intuition that can be formalized on how to improve it; and (e) you believe there are (or it is possible to create) quantitative data in which to explore the theory and your intuition for its improvement.

You will be asked to make a brief in-class presentation of this research question. A written outline should be distributed to the group by noon the day before the class meeting to allow all members of the group to prepare comments, questions and suggestions on each others' proposals.

## Week 4: Narrative

### **Background Reading:**

KKV, Chapter 2.

Kiser, Edgar. 1996. The Revival of Narrative in Historical Sociology: What Rational Choice Theory Can Contribute, *Politics & Society* 24, no. 3 (1996): 249-72.

Abell, Peter “Narrative Explanation: An Alternative to Variable-Centered Explanation?” In *Annual Review of Sociology* 2004: 287-310

[<http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202.100113>]

Ellis, Stephen “The Mask of Anarchy” Introduction (pp. 1-30).

**Assignment:** Read about a particular case (or a small set of cases) that is (or are) an instantiation (or are instantiations) of your theory. You should rely on books, articles, archives, newspapers, biographies, etc. Write a five-page memo on how that case (or those cases) is (or are) anomalous for the reigning theory, and suggest what variables might need to be added or substituted to do better than reigning theory. Write an addendum to this paper that shows an initial search for datasets that might be useful for future high-n statistical tests. Again, papers should be distributed to the group by noon on the day before class to allow all members of the group to prepare comments, questions and suggestions on each others’ proposals.

## Week 5: Formalization

[It is assumed that most students will not yet have taken a course in game theory; the value added at this stage is in identifying ways in which formalization may prove useful in developing a theoretical argument]

### **Background Reading:**

McCarty, Nolan and Adam Meirowitz (2007). *Political Game Theory*. New York: Cambridge UP. Chapters 2, 5 (pp. 87-107 only), 7 (pp. 171-84 only). [This assignment is only for those students without a basic background in game theory. It will not be discussed in class]

Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms*, pp. 40-69

Robert Bates, “The International Coffee Organization” in *Analytic Narratives* [download and read the original Kreps and Wilson paper cited in this article]

Barry Weingast “The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law” *APSR* (1997).

**Assignment:** Identify a piece of research in 440A or B in which the author advances a theoretical argument for which the essential logic can be captured in an extensive form game. On a Power Point slide, write down the basic model and the payoffs, showing how outcomes identified in the research are reached.

### **Class:**

Part I: Discussion of how to choose a model, discussion of Bates

Part II. The Art of Backward Induction in Weingast

Part III: Discussion of the Geddes formalization  
Part IV: Student examples from 440A and B

### Week 6: Formalization of Student Ideas

**Assignment for Week 6:** Specify an extensive form game that captures the essential logic of how you consider outcomes to be reached in your own theoretical argument. With pay-offs justified by assumption, solve through backward induction the equilibrium (or equilibria) of your game.

### Weeks 7: Statistics

[It is assumed that students have taken a course in statistical models in social science; the value added of this course will be in developing appropriate measures]

#### Background Reading:

- Lazarsfeld, Paul F. and Allen H. Barton, "Qualitative Measurement in the Social Sciences: Classification, Typologies, and Indices," in Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell (eds.), *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951, pp. 155-92.
- Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune (1970). Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry. New York: Wiley. Chapters 5 and 6.
- Franzese, Robert (2007). "Context Matters: The Challenge Of Multi-Causality, Context Conditionality, And Endogeneity For Empirical Evaluation Of Positive Theory In Comparative Politics," in S. Stokes and C. Boix (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. New York: Oxford UP.
- Sullivan, John and Feldman, Stanley. 1979. Multiple indicators: An introduction, London: Sage University Press, 9- 25.
- Geddes, Paradigms, pp. 69-86, 148-72 and Appendix C (pp. 247-288)

**Assignment for Week 7:** Class to be broken down into three groups. Each group should download a publicly available dataset. From it, the group should evaluate the specification of these variables and their coding criteria based on principles raised in the required reading, and what students have learned in the PS350 sequence.

### Week 8: Statistical Tests of Student Ideas

**Assignment for Week 8:** Search out a data set that would produce some statistical test of the theory or an observable implication of your own theory. Do some descriptive statistics that show the plausibility of your amendment to the reigning theory. Your analysis should focus on statistical and graphical descriptions of the dependent, and principal independent variables; and on analysis of basic correlations. Presentation of

regression results is optional, and will only be allowed once these basic descriptive statistics have been fully explored. Prepare a 15-minute presentation describing your statistical exploits to present in seminar.

### Week 9: Choosing Cases

#### **Background Reading:**

KKV chaps. 4-6

Lieberman, Evan (2005). "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." American Political Science Review 99(3): 435-52.

Sekhon, Jasjeet (2004). "Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals." Perspectives on Politics 2(2): 281-293.

James Fearon and David Laitin "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods", forthcoming in Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology

**Assignment:** Prepare a short presentation answering the following questions: What cases(s), different from the one that informed your original intuition, would be most productive to study in greater depth to add confidence that your theoretical model and empirical support of it are correct? What additional knowledge might be gained by collecting qualitative evidence on a small number of selected cases?

### Week 10: Final Presentations to Outside Panel

Each student should prepare a 20-minute summary (using transparencies, power point, or printed handouts) of his/her research question, preliminary findings, and research strategy for the future to present to a panel of advanced graduate students qua "outside evaluators" (as if a talk at a professional meeting). Students should then be prepared to answer questions for 25 minutes. Outside evaluators will provide written feedback on the student presentations to accompany instructors' comments on the final research prospectus.