

Political Science 440C Stanford University Spring 2013  
Professors David Laitin and Kenneth Scheve  
Tuesdays 2:15PM – 5:05PM; School of Education 130

## **Seminar: Comparative Political Analysis**

### **I. COURSE SUMMARY**

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

### **II. REQUIREMENTS**

A research prospectus (one in the mode of a 15-page description of research that is standard for NSF proposals) which 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 evaluated on the basis of the appropriateness of the research design and tools for answering your research question, and the quality of the rationale you provide for each component and the inferences that could be drawn from their use. You will not be evaluated on the implementation or on the outcomes of the preliminary or exploratory theoretical and empirical research that you perform.

Before handing in your final assignment, students will have an opportunity to present their prospectus, and defend it, before a group of advanced graduate students. Details of assignments are included below. Memos, slides, etc., should be posted on the Coursework website by 6pm on the Sunday before each meeting to give everyone time to read all student work and to prepare comments and questions. The success of the seminar will depend on each student's preparedness to discuss the assigned readings and to offer comments and feedback on each other's work, as well as the amount of effort each student invests in advancing his/her own research agenda. The reading load is intentionally light so that: (1) students can take the time to look back at readings from 440A and 440B to identify material that can illuminate methodological issues through references to research papers already published in the comparative field; and (2) students can commit to advancing their own work and supporting the work of others with thoughtful comments and criticisms.

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

Geddes, Barbara (2003; hereafter “Geddes”). *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.  
**ISBN-10:** 0472068350  
**ISBN-13:** 978-0472068357

Johnson, Steven (2006). *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic and How It Changed Science, Cities, and The Modern World*. New York: Riverhead.

**ISBN-10:** 1594489254  
**ISBN-13:** 978-1594489259

Kreps, David (1990) Game Theory and Economic Modeling (hereafter GTEM)

**ISBN-10:** 0198283814  
**ISBN-13:** 978-0198283812

Kuhn, Thomas (1996; hereafter “Kuhn”). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**ISBN-10:** 0226458083  
**ISBN-13:** 978-0226458083

#### **IV. STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, 723-1067 TTY).

#### **V. WEEKLY MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

##### **Preparation During Spring Break**

###### *A. Readings*

The first reading introduces the themes of Week 1:

Johnson (2006). Pp. 1-136.

The second reading is for those student with no or limited background in formal theory:

Kreps (1990). Chapters 1-4.

###### *B. Thinking*

Note meeting scheduled for Week 2 and Assignment 1 in Week 3. Students should be doing preliminary thinking about this assignment, the foundation for the entire course, as soon as possible, and surely before the course begins.

##### **Week 1: Question Selection and Research Design**

The purpose of the readings for this week will be to develop criteria for a good research question and a roadmap on a strategy for answering it.

*A. In pursuit of a Research Question*

Geddes. Chapter 1 and pp. 27-35.

Kuhn. Chapters IV, VI, and IX.

Farr, William (1855). “The Thames, the Water Supply, and the Cholera Epidemic” in Noel Humphreys (ed.), Vital Statistics: A Memorial Volume of Selections from the Reports and Writings of William Farr. London: Offices of the Sanitary Institute.

David Friedman (2005) Statistical Models, pp. 1-17

Angrist, Joshua and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. (2009). Mostly Harmless Econometrics. Princeton. Chapter 1.

*B. A Roadmap for Answering It*

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

Ferejohn, John (1991). “Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Elections in Early Stuart England” in Kristen Monroe (ed.), The Economic Approach to Politics: A Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action. New York: Harper Collins.

*C. Research Proposal Guidelines for PS440C* (mini-lecture and handout from Ken Scheve)

**Week 2: Tutorial with Instructors on Developing Student Research Questions**

Students will sign up for half-hour consultations in which both instructors will be present to help develop student research questions. You should come to the meeting with one or more proposed research question(s) that you think could satisfy Assignment 1 (see below).

There will be no formal class meeting in Week 2. In preparation for that meeting, students should consult the memo distributed in class providing research proposal guidelines:

Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon (1988). “The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions.” Memo published by the Social Science Research Council.

Laitin, David (2008) “Muslim Integration into EU Societies: Comparative Perspectives” [NSF proposal submitted and funded].

**Week 3: Political Theory and Comparative Politics**

*Assignment 1:*

Based on the discussions from the week 2 tutorial, 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 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. Prepare a brief in-class presentation of this research question and circulate a memo addressing (a)-(e) above.

**Week 4: Narrative**

Read the narrative below, and then write a preliminary narrative illustrating the perspective on your research question.

Bates, Robert, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast (1998). *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton University Press. “Introduction” (pp. 3-22), and Weingast’s “Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy” (pp. 148-193).

*Assignment 2:*

Read about a particular case (or a small set of cases) that is (or are) an instantiation (or are instantiations) of your motivating intuition. Drawing on books, articles, archives, newspapers, biographies, etc., write a five-page narrative (conscious of the narrative style in Weingast’s chapter) in a way that reveals your conjecture about the mechanism at work and demonstrates to the reader the inadequacy of previous theorizing about the phenomenon that you have highlighted. In class, your narrative will be presented by a partner, who will emphasize the following features of your narrative: Who are the key actors? What are their goals? Which strategies are available to them? What are their beliefs about the state of the world? Especially, what mechanism structures their interactions?

**Week 5: Deductive Reasoning (Modes of Theoretical Argument, both Formal and Informal)**

N.B. It is assumed that most students will not yet have taken a course in game theory, one of the prominent modes of deductive reasoning in our field; we therefore emphasize it in our readings, but students should be aware that there are other forms of formal reasoning (e.g. principal/agent theory and bargaining theory) as well as informal forms of presenting theory that are alternatives, where appropriate, for your projects.

We provide in this week a set of stylized games with political implications; you should read them with an eye for the kind of formal representation that captures the nub of the political transactions that drive outcomes in your narrative. But for whatever forms of deductive reasoning you employ, the goal is to capture the nub of the political transaction (what Max Weber called, using a railroad metaphor, the “switchpoint” in political history) that you seek to explain.

#### *A. A Primer in Game Theory*

David Kreps, GTEM. (Chap 5 & 6; this assumes that those with no background also read 1-4 previously).

#### *B. Reputation Games (Kreps and Wilson) and Their Limits (Bates)*

Kreps, David and Robert Wilson (1982). "Reputation and Imperfect Information." Journal of Economic Theory 27(2): 253-79,

Bates, Robert (1998). "The International Coffee Organization" in Bates et. al., Analytic Narratives.

#### *C. PD and other non-cooperative games*

Fearon and Laitin (1996) "Explaining Ethnic Cooperation" APSR

#### *D. Coordination Games*

Weingast, Barry (1997). "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law." American Political Science Review 91(2):245-63.

Timur Kuran (1991) "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989" World Politics (October 1991)

#### *E. Capturing the Nub of a Political Transaction (different games for different structures)*

Geddes. Pp. 40-69.

### **Week 6: Student Presentations of their Deductive Reasoning**

#### *Assignment 3:*

Pick one of the styles of formalization from week 5, or an alternative form of deductive reasoning (discussed with one of the instructors) and apply it to your research project/puzzle, with explicit justification for choice of domain, statement of alternatives, and answering the question of why your project is like one of the models. If game theory is applied, students should specify that game, with pay-offs justified by assumption. Equilibrium solutions need not be worked out, as the core of the assignment is to highlight the actors, the political/strategic structure, and the sequence of moves. All students will prepare a one-slide presentation of their basic model showing theoretically how outcomes identified in the research are reached.

### **Week 7: Mapping Theory to Data: Measurement and Identification**

All students should read the assigned reading in section “A” below. The seminar will be divided into four groups. Each group will be responsible for reading all the materials in one of the subsequent sections, and preparing a briefing to the entire seminar. The presentation should clearly identify the objective of the empirical work in terms of descriptive or causal inference and then discuss challenges and opportunities for making valid descriptive or causal inferences for each type of research design.

#### *A. Measurement and Theory*

Geddes. Pp. 69-86, 148-72 and Appendix A (pp. 225-232).

Lazarsfeld, Paul F. and Allen H. Barton (1951). “Qualitative Measurement in the Social Sciences: Classification, Typologies, and Indices,” in Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell (eds.), *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. 155-92.

#### *B. Experimental design and methods*

Wantchekon, Leonard (2003). “Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin.” *World Politics* 55: 399-422.

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner & Jeremy Weinstein (2007). “Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?” *APSR* 101(4):709-25.

Humphreys, Macartan, M E Sandbu and W A Masters (2007) "The Role of Leadership in Democratic Deliberations: Results from a Field Experiment in São Tomé and Príncipe" *World Politics*

Olken, Benjamin (2007) “Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia” *Journal of Political Economy* 115 (2).

Angrist and Pischke (2009) Mostly Harmless Econometrics, Chapter 2.

#### *C. Observational data and methods*

Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage. 2010. “The Conscription of Wealth: Mass Warfare and the Demand for Progressive Taxation” *International Organization* Vol. 64 (Fall):529-61.

Abadie, Alberto and Javier Gardeazabal (2003). “The Economic Costs of Conflict: A Case Study of the Basque Country.” *AER* 93(1):113-32.

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson & James A. Robinson (2002). “Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution.” *QJE* 117(4):1231-94.

Nunn, Nathan and Leonard Wantchekon (2011) “The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa” *AER* 101(7).

#### *D. Natural Experiments*

Miguel, Edward (2004). "Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania" *World Politics* 56:327-62.

Posner, Daniel (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 (November): 529-545.

Ferraz, Claudio, and Frederico Finan (2008). "Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effects of Brazil's Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123: 703-45.

Bhavnani, Rikhil (2009) "Do Electoral Quotas Work After They Are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India" *American Political Science Review* 103 (1):23-35.

Eggers, Andrew, and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics." *American Political Science Review* Vol. 103, No. 4:1-21.

Sekhon, Jasjeet and Rocio Titiunik (2012) "When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural Nor Experiments" *American Political Science Review*, 106 (1): 35-57.

#### *E. Strategic Comparisons*

Lieberman, Evan (2009) Boundaries of Contagion: How Ethnic Politics Have Shaped Government Responses to AIDS (Princeton University Press)

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

Fearon, James and David Laitin (2008) "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods". In Janet Box-Steffensmeier et al The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology

"Symposium: Case Selection, Case Studies, and Causal Inference." *Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 6, No. 2 (Fall 2008)

### **Week 8: Operationalizing an empirical project**

Students will work on *two* assignments: one collective (assignment 4) and one individual (assignment 5). No required readings

#### *Assignment 4:*

Class to be broken down into groups based upon common data interests. Each group should download a publicly available dataset. Based on the data/variables available, it should then pose a descriptive question in terms of the relationship between three variables. Collectively, the

group should evaluate the specification of these variables and their coding criteria. Finally, each group should prepare a short presentation, teaching the class: (a) the overall architecture of the dataset; (b) how key variables are measured and specified, with emphasis on reliability and validity; (c) why data are missing (if any) and how are missing data treated in dataset; (d) provide summary univariate statistics, with attention to distribution of values; (e) answer the descriptive question and (f) look at an exemplary paper using this dataset and discuss the role of the dataset in advancing knowledge.

This project is not to be uploaded onto Coursework. Each group will be given 30 minutes to make a class presentation.

*Assignment 5:*

Write a memo on how you will operationalize your empirical project, explaining: (a) scope conditions (i.e. cases for which your theory is relevant); (b) measurement strategy (translating concepts into variables); c) data sources (whether downloaded from publicly available datasets; use of proxies; reliance on surveys or experiments, etc.), and d) identification (whether the objective of your project was to make a descriptive or causal inference, here you should consider the challenges of inferring a causal relationship in your research.)

This project should be uploaded and all projects should be jointly read, but there will be no formal presentations of it by the students. The two instructors will lead the discussion on the highlights of these memos.

### **Week 9: Statistical Examination of Student Hypotheses**

*Assignment 6:*

Build a data set that would produce descriptive statistics of your independent and dependent variables or variables that serve as an observable implication of your own theory. Address for this data issues listed in Assignment 4. With descriptive statistics, show the (im)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. Discuss in light of issues raised in Assignment 5(a) and (c). Presentation of regression results (with controls, or with attempts to provide a causal analysis) is optional, and will only be allowed after these basic descriptive statistics have been fully explored. Prepare a 10-minute presentation describing your statistical exploits to present in seminar.

### **Week 10: Final Presentations to Outside Panel**

Each student should prepare a 20-minute presentation 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.

