This is a survey course designed to introduce students to some of the key issues and debates in the field of comparative politics. The primary focus throughout the course is on theory and methodology in the field. The course prepares students for research in the future by introducing them to the theoretical and methodological options which guide contemporary research in comparative politics.

We will cover a great deal of material in a relatively short period of time. The goal is to give you a strong grasp of the range of possibilities within the field while also enabling you to become well-versed in a wide range of readings. When you complete the course, you should be ‘well-oriented’ – you will know the contours of comparative politics and how to get around in it. You will have a good sense of how the field has evolved; you will know the key contemporary debates.

In other words, through analyzing the theoretical and methodological choices others have made and how these choices have been justified and criticized, you will understand the choices you will face and the stakes involved.

This is a seminar and it will depend on your contributions. Each seminar participant will be expected to lead discussion in at least one seminar meeting; everyone is expected to be prepared to participate in every meeting. The reading load is heavy.

The first section of the course deals with methods in comparative politics. The second section is organized thematically.

You will be expected to write three 4,000 word analytical papers during the semester, one of which must cover material from Part I from the reading list below. The papers can be submitted over the course of the semester or they can be submitted together at the end of the semester. However, all written work must be in by the formal end of graduate classes.

I will provide more details about these papers in our first meeting. I will also set out my expectations for your seminar presentations.
Breakdown of Grade
Seminar participation: 20%
Discussion Leader: 20%
Three Papers: 60%

I have ordered the following books, available in the Bookstore:

Brady and Collier, eds. Rethinking Social Inquiry 2nd. ed 2010
Bennett and Checkel eds. Process Tracing 2015
Levitsky and Way, Competitive Authoritarianism 2010
Schatz, Political Ethnography 2009
Wood, Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador 2003
Poteete et. al. Working Together. Mixed Methods in Practice

Other readings will be provided in scanned or xeroxed form by me or, more usually, will be available in electronic form to you from McGill Libraries.

A couple of comments about how the course starts:

We will begin with four readings from recently published articles or books. I think they give you a good sense of where the field of comparative politics (not the whole field but big parts of it) is right now. All of these readings are programmatic statements; some are explicitly research agendas. All of them address important problems or questions in the field: comparative authoritarianism (Pepinsky), comparative democratization (Cappocia and Ziblatt), institutions and institutional choice (Rodden), state-formation and economic development (Grafe, who is an economic historian but whose work draws on literature from comparative politics). We will return to these themes – political regimes, states and state formation, institutions and institutional analysis, political development, and other themes -- later in the course, and read more widely on them.

For the moment, though, read these selections for their theoretical emphases – how they pose the theoretical problems that motivate their discussion. And read them for the methodological problems, particularly problems of explanation and inference, that they think must be solved and how they propose to solve them or address them.

There are only four readings in this first topic and week in the course. But it is dense material and a challenging way to begin. Unless you are already fairly familiar with the field of comparative politics, you may well find many of the references to various perspectives and authors a lot to take in. Some of the methodological arguments may be new. Remember this is the first week.
There may be slight revisions to readings, but nothing major.

**PART I**

**SEMINAR MEETING # 1: Getting Started.**


**MEETING #2 Methodological Issues, Problems and Assumptions**

Peter A. Hall, “Aligning ontology and methodology in comparative politics”, in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.) Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (2003), Chapter 11.


Adam Przeworski, “Is the science of comparative politics possible?” in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, (eds.) Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics (2007). Read this piece for the practical logic by which he identifies methodological problems linked to observational data. Don’t be intimidated by the basic math. [The title of this piece plays on an earlier paper: Alasdair MacIntyre, “Is a science of comparative politics possible?” in Alasdair MacIntyre, Against the Self-Images of the Age (1971), pp. 260-279. You should read this, but on your own time.]

Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research (1963), pp. 5-24 on validity, pre-experimental and true experimental research designs. Also for your interest, pp. 61-64 on regression-discontinuity and pp. 70-71 on matching. More generally, this short book is an early, intuitive and useful introduction to experimental research designs.

MEETING # 3 KKV vs. Brady and Collier. Qualitative vs. Quantitative?
Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry (1994), Chapters 1, 2 and 6.

Brady and Collier, Rethinking Social Inquiry 2nd ed. (2010). We will read most of this book.

Stephen Morgan and Christopher Winship, Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research 2nd ed. (2015), Chapter 1 but skip Section 1.3.

MEETING # 4 Case Studies and Process Tracing

Reread Chapter 6 of KKV.

MEETING # 5 Political Ethnography


MEETING #6 Multiple Methods in Practice
Amy Poteete et. al. Working Together (2010)

PART II

MEETING # 7 Origins and Evolution of Modern States
Reread Grafe from Week 1


Thomas Ertman, Birth of the Leviathan (1997), Chapters 1, 7 (pages 1-34; 317-324).


Stephan Haggard, “The developmental state is dead: long live the developmental state!”, in James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (eds.) Advances in Comparative Historical Analysis (2015), Chapter 2.


**MEETING #8 Institutions.**


Giovanni Capoccia, ‘Critical junctures and institutional change”, in James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (eds.) Advances in Comparative Historical Analysis (2015), Chapter 6.


Adam Przeworski, “Geography vs. institutions revisited: Were fortunes reversed?” (nd.).

**MEETING # 9 Parties, Party Systems, Voters**
Refresh yourself with Rodden from Week 1.


**MEETING #10 Political Development**

**MEETING #11 Political Regimes. Democracy and Democratic Transitions**
Reread Capoccia and Ziblatt from Week 1.

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/world_politics/v049/49.2przeworski.html


http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/world_politics/v055/55.2bunce.pdf


**MEETING #12 Regimes Con’t: Competitive Authoritarianism**
Reread Pepinsky from Week 1.


**MEETING # 13 Rebellions and Contentious Politics**


Jack A. Goldstone, “Comparative historical analysis and knowledge accumulation in the study of revolution”, in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschmeyer (eds.) Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. (2003), Chapter 2.