Course Description

The idea behind this course is to provide an overview of some of the major theoretical perspectives on the “big questions” in comparative politics scholarship. Of course, delimiting what the big questions are is a difficult task, and no warrant is given here that the selections made for this course are entirely unbiased. While I have tried to cover many bases, the course naturally reflects my tendency to think of comparative politics from a historical perspective – especially in terms of the origins of many of the institutional arrangements that form the central backdrop of most contemporary scholarship. Thus, the course begins with an examination of accounts of the formation of first the market and then the modern bureaucratic state. Subsequent sessions examine aspects of the linkage between state and society – from the extractive (taxation), to the origins of alternative political regimes, to the relationship between economic modernization and democracy and the meaning of democratic politics in a market economic context. From there we move to a discussion of the origin of two critical species of political parties (Christian- and Social-Democratic), and the party systems within which they operate. Next comes the question of violence, both in terms of the creation of order out of violence and the dynamics of violence in civil wars. And finally we end with an examination of alternative approaches to the political economy of economic development.

Responsibilities

This class meets once a week for almost three hours, which gives us sufficient time to read and think about the issues at hand. Vigorous classroom participation will be essential to making the course a success, as will timely completion of the readings. This is a seminar, not a lecture, class, and as such discussion and debate will be essential. Always bring the readings to class, as we will make frequent reference to them.

Requirements

Every week each student will write a roughly one page “reaction” to that week’s readings. These reaction papers should be emailed to everyone in the class no later than 5:00PM on the evening before the class session. The point of these reactions papers is NOT TO SUMMARIZE the reading, but rather to raise a question or discussion point for us to think about during the seminar. This is a seminar, and thus what we cover will in part be governed by what you find perplexing. This is a great venue to make such a point. Note also, that the comment can be about a small point, a big theoretical issue, a methodological consideration, or the treatment of empirical evidence, *inter alia*. The idea is to raise a topic you think worth considering.

In addition, once during the course, each student will write a five-page paper discussing one of the important works we are covering. It will be due, as above, the day before the date in which it is to be discussed in class. Who is responsible for what set of readings will be determined during the first class. The basic point in this paper will be to examine how or whether the work in question advances our knowledge on a particular subject (set in the context of the state of knowledge in a particular topic area).
This will in part require a “reverse engineering” of the research design that supported the work in question, and will address such issues as: What theoretical question frames the work? What categories of evidence are brought to bear? Were the causal variables appropriately conceptualized and measured? Were the tests of hypotheses appropriate to the theories under examination? What alternative approaches were not discussed? What other data would be required to make the argument more compelling? How does the work fit into ongoing debates in the area? What do alternative approaches to evidence tell us for the robustness of the findings? It will not be a summary or a literature review. More elaboration on this assignment will be forthcoming later.

The principal written assignment for the class will be a substantial paper (which may be an extension of the 5-page paper) that is: (1) a research paper that departs from where the readings for one of our topics leaves off (i.e., tries to take the “next step”), (2) or a re-analysis of one of the topics considered in the course with different data/methods (e.g., using new cases; from a distinct methodological perspective or approach; with a re-conceptualization of key variables, etc.), or (3) a traditional research paper on the topic of your choice (with approval). Typically, such papers are on the order of 20-30 pages, though there is no strict upper or lower limit.

A brief presentation of your final paper will take place on the last class session (time/place TBD).

Grades will be assigned on the following basis: class participation and reaction papers (15%), five-page paper (20%), presentation (10%), final paper (55%).

**Deadlines:** Reaction papers are to be distributed to the entire class by email by 5:00PM the night before class. Five page papers must be emailed to all class members by the same (5:00PM) deadline. The final version of the major paper is due at **12:00pm on Wednesday, December 14th, 2016.**

A Warning. This is a foundation class in comparative politics. Since we have a large amount of ground to cover, there is no way to keep the amount of reading small. As a consequence, you should understand that this course will tend to be time consuming. Coming to class unprepared, however, is not acceptable. All reading should be done in a timely fashion.

A Note

The syllabus for this course may be updated from time to time as we move along through the course. The most-current (and binding) version will be found on the carmen website. I will announce any changes by email as well.

**Readings**

There are eleven books that you will need for this course, as well as quite a few articles. The articles are generally available electronically through the library. A few readings (principally selections from books not included in the list below) are not available electronically and will be made available on the carmen website for this course. From time to time readings may be moved from “required” to “recommended” depending on whether we are successfully getting through all the material each week and if we are getting behind. I’ll let you know by email if the readings in any week are to be reduced.

The books for purchase or other form of acquisition are:


**Academic Honesty**

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy. If you have any question about the University's Code of Student Conduct, please see the web site: [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_7-13-06.pdf](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_7-13-06.pdf).

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; [http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/).
Schedule of Readings

August 25. Introduction

September 1. Capitalism, the Market, and Market Society.


September 8. NO CLASS. APSA.

September 15. NO CLASS. MAKE-UP DATE IN LAST WEEK FOR PRESENTATIONS.

September 22. The Birth of the Modern State in Europe.


Soifer, Hillel. TBD.


October 6. Taxation and Fiscal Sociology.


October 13. NO CLASS. AUTUMN BREAK.

October 20. Regimes and Nations


Recommended:


**October 27. The Modernization Debates.**


**November 3. Markets and Democracy.**


**November 10. Political Parties and Party Systems.**


**November 17. Violence and Order**


November 24. NO CLASS. Thanksgiving

December 1. The Politics of Development


December 8 or 9. Make-Up class session for presentations.

FINAL PAPER DUE (by upload to carmen) at 12:00pm on Wednesday, December 14th, 2016.