This course is intended to provide a broad overview of the various kinds of data, methods and approaches found in Comparative Politics. In light of the field's enormously broad array of subject matters and its heterodoxy, the sub-title for this course is "Different Strokes for Different Folks." It central focus derives from the premise that there is no single "best way" to undertake research in this field, and from deep skepticism that there is or ever will be a single "wave of the future." But while it will point to the strengths and unique contributions of each particular approach, it is also intended to familiarize students with the shortcomings of each approach, and sensitize them to errors inherent in each approach which should be avoided.

The course begins with an overview of The Comparative Method and the nature of Political Science's claim to be scientific. Each of the following six sections of the course examines a particular approach to the study of Comparative Politics: case studies; qualitative comparative studies; quantitative, aggregate-data comparative studies (both ecological and contextual); cross-national survey research; thick description; and rational choice. These sections will unavoidably begin with a review of the often stultifying methodological "classics" which introduce this approach and describe its strengths and weaknesses. Students will then read examples of work using this approach, some of which are representative of good work, and some of which are real howlers--intentionally selected to illustrate the abuses of a particular approach or, more generically, lousy scholarship. During these six weeks, students will write a short critique of each of the "examples," identifying the strengths and weaknesses illustrated by each piece. These short papers (2 or 3 pages, each worth 10% of the total course grade) must be turned into the instructor before 9:30 AM on the day those examples are to be discussed. Students should be prepared to verbally defend their critiques during that afternoon's class discussion. (Late papers will not be accepted.) This will be followed by an exploration of the special characteristics of economic and fiscal data commonly used in comparative research (with an accompanying data-processing exercise, worth 10% of the course grade), and a workshop on the art of in-depth interviewing.

In the final section of the course, students will present and discuss a research question and design of their own choosing. It is hoped that students would select for these research proposals theoretical and empirical questions that might eventually serve as the foci of their respective dissertations. The research proposals will be presented to and discussed collectively by all of the participants in the seminar. The initial paper (which will not be graded) will then be revised (taking into account the suggestions and criticisms offered during the group discussions) and submitted to the instructor at the beginning of Finals Week. The final version will count for 30% of the total course grade.

All course readings have been placed on reserve in the Main Library (except for journal articles which are already on reserve in the Graduate History Library, on the second floor of the Main Library. Those readings not marked with an asterisk have been photocopied and can be purchased from Cop-Ez, in the basement of Bricker Hall.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disabilities Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor of their needs.
Required Readings

1. **Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method (and an Antidote for "Overconscious Thinking")**


2. **Case Studies**


(Examples:)


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1 It is assumed that all students in this class will have taken Political Science 684, and/or read Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). Students who have not done so (or are for other reasons unfamiliar with key concepts, such as "endogeneity," "multicollinearity," or "sampling bias" should consult the relevant sections of King, Keohane and Verba.


3. **Comparative Studies Based on Qualitative Data**


(Examples:)


* Richard Gunther, "Spanish Public Policy: From Dictatorship to Democracy," (skim pp. 1-26, which summarizes the findings of *Public Policy in a No-Party State*).

4. **Cross-National Quantitative Research: Ecological and Contextual Studies**


(Examples:)

3


5. Cross-National Survey Research


(Examples:)

* Jack Dennis, et al, "Political Socialization to Democratic Orientations in Four Western Political Systems," *Comparative Political Studies*, 1, April, 1968, pp. 71-101.


6. Thick Description


7. **Rational Choice**


(Examples:)


8. **The Art of In-Depth Interviewing**


(Examples:)

* Paul Quirk, "Industry Jobs and the Career Incentive," in *Industry Influence in Federal


Richard Gunther, "Interdepartmental Budget Negotiations," in Public Policy in a No-Party State, pp. 144-178 (re-read).

9. Analyzing Economic and Fiscal Data

10. Presentation and Discussion of Student Dissertation Proposals