

Political Science 726
Methods and Approaches in Comparative Politics

Richard Gunther
2058 Derby Hall
292-6266

Office Hours:
Monday and Wednesday, 1:30-3:00, and by appointment

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." Its 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")¹**

"The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium," contributions by Kohli, Evans, Katzenstein, Przeworski and Kohli, *World Politics*, 48, October 1995, pp. 1-21.

* Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, "Research Traditions and Theory in Comparative Politics: An Introduction," in Mark Irving Lichback and Alan S. Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

David Laitin, *et al*, "Review Symposium: The Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation," *American Political Science Review (APSR)*, 89, #2, June 1995, pp. 454-481.

Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *APSR*, 63, #4, December 1970, pp. 1033-1053.

Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," in *American Political Science Review (APSR)*, 65, 1971, pp. 682-693.

* Arend Lijphart, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies*, 8, #2, July 1975, pp. 158-177.

* John P. Frendreis, "Explanation of Variation and Detection of Covariation: The Purpose and Logic of Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies*, 16, #2, July 1983, pp. 255-272.

* David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in Dankwart Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, *Comparative Political Dynamics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), pp. 7-31.

2. **Case Studies**

* Alexander George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1979), pp. 43-67.

(Examples:)

Aaron Wildavsky, "Budgeting as Trust: The British Expenditure Process," in *Budgeting* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), pp. 69-91.

Douglas R. Boulter, "Setting Speed Limits... and Comparing Public Policy-Making," *Comparative Politics*, 13, October, 1980, pp. 79-102.

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.

* R. William Liddle, "The Relative Autonomy of the Third World Politician: Soeharto and Indonesian Economic Development in Comparative Perspective," *International Studies Quarterly*, 35, 1991, pp. 403-427.

Richard Gunther, *Public Policy in a No-Party State: Spanish Planning and Budgeting in the Twilight of the Franquist Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 1-5, 41-77, 144-178, and 260-284.

3. Comparative Studies Based on Qualitative Data

* Charles C. Ragin, "Case-Oriented Comparative Methods," in *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 34-52.

* Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22, 1980, pp. 174-197.

* Stanley Lieberson, "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases," *Social Forces*, 70, December 1991, pp. 307-320.

(Examples:)

* Jan Johannesson and Günther Schmid, "The Development of Labour Market Policy in Sweden and in Germany: Competing or Convergent Models to Combat Unemployment?" *European Journal of Political Research (EJPR)*, 8, 1980, pp. 387-406.

Perry Anderson, "The Absolutist State in the West," pp. 15-42, "Class and State," pp. 43-59, and "Spain," pp. 60-84, in *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso Editions, 1974).

* Reinhard Bendix, "Sacred and Secular Foundations of Kinship," in *Kings or People?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 21-60.

Aaron Wildavsky, "Toward a Comparative Theory of Budgetary Processes," in *Budgeting*, pp. 3-19.

* 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

* Charles C. Ragin, "The Variable-Oriented Approach," in Ragin, *The Comparative Method*, pp. 53-68.

* Erwin K. Scheuch, "Cross-National Comparisons Using Aggregate Data: Some Substantive and Methodological Problems," in Richard L. Merritt and Stein Rokkan, *Comparing Nations: The Use of Quantitative Data in Cross-National Research* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 131-167.

* Juan J. Linz, "Ecological Analysis and Survey Research," in Dogan and Rokkan, *Quantitative Ecological Analysis*, pp. 91-101 only.

(Examples:)

Victor Ginsburgh and Pierre Pestieau, "Local Government Expenditures in Belgium: Do Political Distinctions Matter," *EJPR*, 9, #2, June 1981, pp. 169-179.

R.D. McKinlay and A.S. Cohan, "A Comparative Analysis of the Political and Economic Performance of Military and Civilian Regimes," *Comparative Politics*, 8, 1975, pp. 1-30.

* Francis G. Castles and R.D. McKinlay, "Public Welfare Provision, Scandinavia, and the Sheer Futility of the Sociological Approach to Politics," *British Journal of Political Science*, 9, 1978, 157-171.

Francis G. Castles, "Social Expenditure and the Political Right: A Methodological Note," and "Comment," by Manfred Schmidt, with response by Castles, *EJPR*, 1986, 14, pp. 669-83.

Edward M. Crenshaw, "Democracy and Demographic Inheritance: The Influence of Modernity and Proto-Modernity on Political and Civil Rights, 1965 to 1980," *American Sociological Review*, 60, October, 1995, pp. 702-718.

5. Cross-National Survey Research

* Juan J. Linz, "Ecological Analysis and Survey Research," in Dogan and Rokkan, *Quantitative Ecological Analysis*, pp. 101-121 only.

* Sidney Verba, "Cross-National Survey Research: The Problem of Credibility," in Ivan Vallier, ed. *Comparative Methods in Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 309-355.

* Phillip E. Converse, "Some Priority Variables in Comparative Political Research," in Otto Stammer, ed., *Party Systems, Party Organizations, and the Politics of New Masses* (Berlin: Institut für Politische Wissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin, 1968), pp. 271-290.

(Examples:)

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

* Peter McDonough, Samuel H. Barnes and Antonio López Pina, "The Nature of Political Support and Legitimacy in Spain," *Comparative Political Studies*, 27, October 1994, pp. 349-380.

Leonardo Morlino and José Ramón Montero, "Legitimacy and Democracy in Southern Europe," in Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jürgen Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 231-260.

6. Thick Description

* Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

James C. Scott's contribution to "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics," *World Politics* symposium, pp. 28-37.

(Examples:)

- * Clifford Geertz, "Culture War," *New York Review of Books*, November 30, 1995, pp. 4-6.
- * Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Culture*, pp. 412-53.
- * Arlene Elowe Macleod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), "Preface" (pp. xiii-xxi), and pp. 1-17 and 97-124.

7. Rational Choice

Peter C. Ordeshook, "The Emerging Discipline of Political Economy," in James Alt and Kenneth Shepsle, *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 9-23.

- * George Tsebelis, "In Defense of the Rational-Choice Approach," in *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 18-47.
- * Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 1-46.

(Examples:)

Josep M. Colomer, "Transitions by Agreement: Modeling the Spanish Way," *APSR*, 85, #4, December, 1991, pp. 1283-1302.

Barbara Geddes, "A Game Theoretic Model of Reform in Latin American Democracies," *APSR*, 85, #2, June 1991, pp. 371-392.

Richard D. McKelvey and Raymond Riezman, "Seniority in Legislatures," *APSR*, 86, #4, December, 1992, 951-965.

- * Robert H. Bates, "Governments and Agricultural Markets in Africa," in Robert H. Bates, ed., *Toward a Political Economy of Development: A Rational Choice Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

8. The Art of In-Depth Interviewing

- * Dean Hammer and Aaron Wildavsky, "The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview: An (Almost) Operational Guide," in Aaron Wildavsky, *Craftways: On the Organization of Scholarly Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1989), pp. 57-95.

Robert J-P. Hauck, *et al*, "Verification/Replication: Symposium." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28, #3, September 1995, pp. 443-498 (American Political Science Association).

(Examples:)

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

Regulatory Agencies (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 143-152.

Robert Putnam, "Studying Elite Political Culture: the Case of 'Ideology'," *APSR*, 65, 1971, pp. 651-681.

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