

Seminar Syllabus

Comparative Politics

Universidad Carlos III

Instructor:

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Office: 18.2.E.07

Office Hours: Tuesday, 16.30-18.00

Class Time and Location: Friday, 14:30-16.00 (EEII-ADE) 5.1.02 B or INF-17.1.14 (*)

Friday, 16:15-17.45 (EEII-DER) 9.2.2 or INF-17.1.14 (*)

Course Description:

The goal of this seminar is to give students the ability to *practice* comparative politics research. This means primarily three things: a) critically reading existing scholarship, b) adjudicating between competing theoretical accounts, and c) developing research hypotheses and testing them with data. Through a combination of discussions and debates as well as in-class and take-home data analyses, students will gain experience in each of them.

The individual sessions will take different forms. At the beginning of the semester, the seminar will start out with a few overview sessions in which students will discuss assigned readings. In the sessions that are marked as “Debate” in the syllabus, the seminar will look at controversial scholarly debates on a certain question. The readings present 2 or 3 different viewpoints. Students will be arbitrarily assigned to one of the views and have to argue in favor of that position. In the second half of the semester, the seminar will focus more heavily on applied data analysis. Some sessions will be entirely focused on data analysis, while others (marked “Discussion and Analysis” in the syllabus) will combine the discussion of a reading with data analysis of the topic discussed in the reading.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Exam covering the lectures (40%): As discussed by Prof. Sánchez-Cuenca.

Seminar Participation (10%): How much students get out of the seminar will depend heavily upon the quality of class participation, which therefore plays a big role in determining the grades. Students should have completed all readings *prior* to class; come prepared with observations, opinions, and questions about the readings; and participate actively in discussions.

Data Analysis Assignments (25%): There will be two assignments during the semester. Students will be given a short problem set that requires them to do their own data analysis (using the *Quality of Government* dataset) and write up the results in at most 2 pages (single-spaced, including any figures and tables). The problem set will be handed out one week before an assignment is due.

Group Research Design Presentation (25%): In the final two sessions of the semester (December 4 and 11), students are required to make a group presentation of

a research design that they have developed over the course of the semester, using what they have learned in the lectures as well as the seminar. Groups should consist of 4-5 people. Students should identify a research question and propose a research design that would allow them to answer that question: What case or cases would they study? What are the hypotheses? What data would you collect? How would you analyze it? We will talk more about this assignment in class throughout the semester. Note that you will not have to actually *do* your research design, but you should propose a design that one could feasibly execute.

Make-up Policy and Plagiarism:

There will be no make-ups for the presentations and assignments handed in late will not be accepted, unless the student provides a doctor's report including the doctor's contact information.

Plagiarism is a serious ethical and academic offense and will not be accepted in any form.

Seminar Schedule and Reading Assignments

Note that sessions marked with (*) take place in Room INF-17.1.14

Session 1 (September 18): Introduction to Comparative Politics

In this session students are introduced to the study of comparative politics. We are discussing a qualitative study about why there was a civil war in Spain in the 1930s, while at the same time in Sweden a wide-ranging and long-lasting compromise between the Left and the Right was struck.

- Lapuente, Victor and Bo Rothstein (2014). "Civil War Spain Versus Swedish Harmony: The Quality of Government Factor." *Comparative Political Studies* 47(10): 1416-1441.

Session 2 (September 25): The Science in Political Science

Students are introduced to what it means to study politics scientifically.

- King, Gary and Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1 (skip Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3).
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions, 2nd Edition*. W. W. Norton & Company. Pages 3-6, 13-35.

Session 3 (October 2): Approaches to Study Politics

Students learn about the main ways to study politics empirically. The focus is first on the differences between large-N (quantitative) and small-N (qualitative) research. Then, we discuss the advantages and limitations of experiments and natural experiments in Comparative Politics.

- Hancké, Bob (2009). *Intelligent Research Design. A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2.
- Dunning, Thad (2012). *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences. A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 (skip Sections 1.3.1., 1.4, 1.7, and 1.8).

Session 4 (October 9): Debate – What Determines Economic Development?

In this first debate session, students will argue about one of the most fundamental questions in comparative politics: Why are some countries poor and others are rich? In recent years there has been a controversial debate between proponents of two main explanations: geography and political institutions.

- Sachs, Jeffrey D. (2001). “Tropical Underdevelopment.” *NBER Working Paper Series*, 8119. (Focus on the argument rather than on the regressions and technical details.)
- Acemoglu, Daron and James. A. Robinson (2012). *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. Crown Publishers. Chapter 3.

Session 5 (October 16): Introduction to Data Analysis (*)

In this session, students are introduced to empirical data analysis. They learn how a dataset is structured and how it can be analyzed. Throughout the course, we use the *Quality of Government* dataset.

- Familiarize yourself with the *Quality of Government* data:
- http://www.qogdata.pol.gu.se/data/qog_bas_jan15.pdf (No need to read in detail, but look through it to get a sense of the variables this dataset contains)
- <http://qog.pol.gu.se/data/datavisualizationtool> (Tool that provides simple data visualization. Explore some connections between variables.)

Session 6 (October 23): Discussion and Analysis – Ethnic Conflict (*)

Why do people of different ethnicities at times brutally fight each other, while at other times they co-exist peacefully? We first discuss one possible reason, and then look at ethnicity and conflict empirically.

- Posner, Daniel N. (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), 529-545.

[First data analysis assignment due in class](#)

Session 7 (October 30): Measurement (*)

How do we turn our theoretical concepts into data? Measurement is a crucial and difficult component of empirical social science. In this session, this is demonstrated using the example of democracy. While the concept is ubiquitous in comparative politics, there is no consensus on how to measure democracy and when a country counts as democratic.

Students will code a sample of countries according to the criteria of a number of widely used indicators.

- Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi (2000). *Democracy and Development. Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- Marshall, Monty G., Ted Robert Gurr, and Keith Jagers (2013) *Polity IV Project. Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013. Dataset Users' Manual*. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4manualv2013.pdf>. Pages 13-18.

Session 8 (November 6): Discussion and Analysis – Waves of Democracy (*)

A few hundred years ago, pretty much every state on earth was run by autocrats. Today, the majority of countries are democratic. We discuss this spread of democracy based on reading parts of one of the most important books in Comparative Politics, and examine it empirically in the computer lab.

- Huntington, Samuel P. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press. Pages 3-46.

Session 9 (November 13): Debate – Majoritarian vs. Consociational Democracies

The debate in this session focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of the two main ways to organize a democracy: the majoritarian and the consensus models.

- Lijphart, Arend (1999). *Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1-3.

[Second data analysis assignment due in class](#)

Session 10 (November 20): Discussion and Analysis – Autocratic Politics (*)

We have discussed when a country is considered democratic, and we have looked at differences among democratic countries. In this session, we look at how autocratic countries differ from each other.

- Svobik, Milan (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Session 11 (November 27): Debate – Why are Countries (not) Democratic?

Why are some countries democratic, while others are ruled by autocrats? When does a country democratize? Again, this is one of the most important questions in contemporary Comparative Politics, and again there is a controversial about it, which students will recreate this session.

- Inglehart, Ronald and Christian Welzel (2009). “How Development Leads to Democracy: What We Know about Modernization.” *Foreign Affairs* 88(2): 32-48.
- Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi (2000). *Democracy and Development. Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press. Pages 78-106.

- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson (2009). *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. Pages 15-30.

Session 12 (December 4): Research Design Presentations I

Session 13 (December 11): Research Design Presentations II