PS 200B: Major Themes in Comparative Analysis

Version 2/14/19

Spring 2019
Monday 12-2 PM
202 Barrows Hall

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Office Hours: Monday 3-4:30

This course provides an introduction to research design in comparative politics; it is the second semester of the two-semester introductory graduate sequence for the comparative sub-field. We will focus on various topics relevant to doing research, such as how to formulate research questions; develop concepts and measures; improve the validity of descriptive and causal inferences; and use various qualitative and quantitative methods in the service of diverse substantive agenda. Most of the major approaches currently used in the subfield of comparative politics are represented. The readings will cover many of the topics from 200A but we will focus more on their research designs and methods. The course has two objectives: to developing your ability to critique research, and to provide a foundation for your dissertation and beyond.

There are three main requirements for the course, in addition to completion of all assigned readings and engaged participation in class discussions:

1. Respond to weekly readings in a written statement of no more than three double-spaced pages. Reading responses should be sent to me by Sunday evening and will sometimes be posted on the bCourses site. Each student should complete six responses during the semester, choosing from among the ten eligible sessions (excluding the first and last sessions).
2. Read the paper to be presented at each week’s Comparative Politics Colloquium and attend the workshop itself, which meets Thursdays at 12:30 PM. (Many of you will be also registered for the colloquium as a course). We may devote some class time to discussing the CP Colloquium papers.
3. Write a research proposal in which you present a research question and devise a strategy for investigating that question. While you will not actually carry out the proposed research this semester, you should anticipate the steps that would be involved in doing so. In some cases, such proposals may provide a foundation for 2nd year M.A. essays and may help to orient fieldwork and data collection over the summer. The final proposal should be 10-15 double-spaced pages (plus an optional literature review supplement). Draft proposals should be ready by April 22 for discussion on April 29. The final version is due May 13.
There are two books you should purchase:


All readings not in the two aforementioned books are available on bCourses.

I reserve the right to amend the syllabus.

**Schedule of Topics**

**January 28: Introduction**


**February 4: What Is A Good Research Question?**


**February 11: Concepts and Measurement**


**February 18: Presidents Day**

**February 25: Description**


**March 4: Descriptive Inference**


**March 11: Causal Inference**


**March 18: Field Experiments**


**March 25: Spring Break**

**April 1: “Natural Experiments”: As if Randomization, Regression Discontinuity, and Instrumental Variables**

Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge University Press, **Chapters 1-4, 7-10.**


April 8: Quantitative Observational Designs: Regression, Difference in Difference, Matching


April 15: Qualitative Observational Designs: Process Tracing, Comparative Historical Analysis, and Mixed Methods


**April 22: TBA**

**April 29: Discussion of Research Proposals**