Learning Outcomes:

- Explore and critique different theoretical traditions and empirical orientations in comparative politics
- Acquire skills to identify topics worthy of original research and situate them within existing scholarly literature
- Gain familiarity with common tools of comparative analysis
- Evaluate concepts and effectively develop alternative definitions and plausible operationalizations
- Practice practical techniques for improving writing
- Prepare for PhD comprehensives

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces PhD students to core themes, debates, and concepts of comparative politics. The readings explore different theoretical traditions and interrogate the extent to which they can be considered complementary or in conflict. Lectures will familiarize students with the intellectual histories of these traditions and discuss the relationships among methodological innovations, theory, and discovery.

Comparative politics is traditionally understood as a subfield of political science. As such, it differs from international relations by focusing on comparisons within or between countries, regions, or systems. Yet shared interests in topics such as terrorism, corruption, democratization, and populism have blurred many of these distinctions. Political science has also increasingly mirrored the interdisciplinary approach to international affairs at the heart of SIS by incorporating research techniques and ideas from fields such as psychology, biology, mathematics, and especially economics. This seminar will expose students to emerging trends, such as field experiments and semi-authoritarianism, alongside classic research on public goods, collective action, clientelism, and contentious politics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn how to identify and critique different theoretical traditions. They will also learn how to specify a research topic, situate it within the relevant scholarly literature, and justify its broader importance. Although it is not a methodology class, the seminar will expose students to a range of methodologies and the conditions influencing their selection. It will also give students the opportunity to practice research design by formulating research questions, assessing options for case selection, thinking critically about concept development, and being creative about measurement.

COURSE MATERIALS

The AU bookstore has ordered the following books, and they are all on short-term reserve in the library too:

**E-reserves:** these readings are indicated by an *asterisk* on the syllabus. Some required materials have a hyperlink on the syllabus and are not on Blackboard. If you encounter any problems accessing the e-readings, please notify the course assistant and then search for the item using the AU library’s “search box” (Google Scholar will sometimes let you down). Please note that the required readings are listed according to a recommended sequence, not alphabetically.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Analytical essays** – Each student will sign up to write two short essays (of about six pages each) that explain and critique the readings for the week. Additional instructions and tips for this assignment are posted on Blackboard. (15% each)

- **Writing modules** – These one-page assignments are designed to familiarize you with structure, language, and techniques of academic writing. They also give you opportunities to learn how to constructively critique your colleagues in a conversational setting and receive public commentary from discussants. Each module is posted as a discussion forum on Blackboard with instructions and additional information. Please post your assignment as a thread in the appropriate forum prior to class (5% each):
  - Module #1, creative measurement, due on September 14.
  - Module #2, the empirical puzzle as motivating question, due on September 28.
  - Module #3, the art of the introductory anecdote, due on November 2.

- **Paper and presentation on regime change** – In a paper of 10-15 double-spaced pages, discuss Brownlee et al. and Chenoweth and Stephan. Compare and contrast the arguments for democratization “from above” and “from below.” Be sure to reference the relevant literature, to examine their causal variables, and to discuss two cases that illustrate contrasting outcomes. Additional research is acceptable but not necessary. Hardcopy due on November 16 in class (25%). Come to class prepared to do a presentation for about ten minutes.

- **Welzel chapter outline**, due in class on November 30.

- **Class participation** (10%)

- **Take home final** – you will have no more than one week to complete the exam (20%)

**ADMINISTRATIVE:**
A passing grade will not be awarded without completion of all requirements. If you anticipate missing an assignment deadline due to a medical or other emergency, please notify me before the due date. My grading scale is as follows: 100 to 94 is an A, 93 to 90 is an A-, 89 to 87 is a B+, 86 to 84 is a B, 83 to 80 is a B-, etc. Late papers will be penalized. AU’s Academic Integrity Code will be strictly enforced. For information consult the Provost’s website. All papers must follow a formatting style such as Chicago, APSA or MLA. For more information go to [http://subjectguides.library.american.edu/citation](http://subjectguides.library.american.edu/citation). Do not browse, email, text, etc. during class!

1) **INTRODUCTION** (August 29)

   **NOTE:** class meets on **Tuesday in SIS 349** instead of Thursday this week only.


Recommended:
Silvers, Nate. The Signal and the Noise: Why Most Predictions Fail-- But Some Don't.
Weber, Max. “Science as a Profession,” http://www.sociosite.net/topics/texts/weber_science_as_a_profession.php

2) CONCEPTS (September 7)

Recommended:

3) OPERATIONALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT (September 14)

Writing module #1: creative measurement
Recommended:
American Political Science Association. 2017. Comparative Democratization Newsletter, Special Issue on “Measuring Democracy” (June). *Posted to Blackboard under “content.”*

4) THEORIES AND CAUSALITY (September 21)

Recommended:

5) DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION (September 28)
http://blogs.die-gdi.de/2017/02/14/africas-democracy-is-good-for-growth/

⇒ Writing module #2: using a puzzle to express your research motivation

Recommended:

6) STATE BUILDING AND STATE FAILURE (October 5)
* Tilly, Charles. Chapter 1, in Formation of National States in Western Europe (1975)

Recommended:


### 7) INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS (October 12)


**Recommended:**


### 8) COLLECTIVE ACTION AND PUBLIC GOODS (October 19)


**And read one of the following:**


**Recommended:**

**9) SOCIAL MOVEMENTS (October 26)**

**Guest lecture:** Professor Todd Eisenstadt, School of Public Affairs


Chenoweth and Stephan. Read through Chapter 3.

**Recommended Readings:**

**10) STATE AND SOCIETY STRUGGLES (November 2)**

Chenoweth and Stephan, Chapters 4, 8 and 9. And choose one of the following case study chapters: 5, 6, or 7

Brownlee et al. Introduction and Chapter 1

➤ **Writing module #3:** the art of the anecdote as an introductory device

**Recommended:**


11) DEMOCRACIES AND DICTATORSHIPS IN THE ARAB SPRING (November 9) Brownlee et al., Chapters 2 – 5.

Recommended:


12) REGIME CHANGE – FROM ABOVE OR FROM BELOW? (November 16) Paper due and class presentations.

13) POLITICAL CULTURE (November 30)
* De Tocqueville, Alexis. Introduction
Welzel, Introduction and chapter 1. Prepare a short outline of 1-2 pages that explains and critiques one of following chapters in greater detail. (You should skim the other chapters. Note that each one has a useful “key points” section at the end.) Consider issues such as concept definition, operationalization, and unit of analysis. A goal of this assignment is to assess your ability to think critically and express yourself clearly, using some of the tools we learned earlier in the course. The outline will be shared with your classmates.

- Chapter 2, “Mapping differences” – measuring emancipative values
- Chapter 3, “Multilevel drivers” – values in individuals, societies, and cultural zones
- Chapter 4, “Tracing change” – longitudinal analysis

Recommended:

14) FREEDOM AND CULTURAL CHANGE (December 7)
Welzel, Chapters 5 through 10 and conclusion.

Recommended:

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE ON DECEMBER 14

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/ college-specific information.