THEORIES OF COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (SIS 672-002)
American University, School of International Service

Fall 2015
Dr. Carl LeVan
Thursdays, 5:30 – 8:00 in Ward 107
SIS room 343
Course RA: TBA
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Office hours: Thurs 2-5 & by appt

Course description:
This course provides a survey of major theoretical approaches to comparative politics and international relations, fields which have traditionally been treated separately. Our class readings and discussions aim to build bridges between them, cultivating an interdisciplinary approach to international studies broadly conceived. We critically examine core topics such as the relationship between democracy and development, the evolving nature of the state, political culture and social mobilization, and ethnicity.

The course is divided into five broad units. The introductory unit gives a brief history of political science, and an overview of social theory, which provides the intellectual foundations for many of the analyses that follow. Second, we address the state, human agency, and different factors that shape or constrain international interactions. This includes an overview of realist traditions in international relations theory, and an emphasis on constructivism as an alternative mode of analysis. Third, we explore development and economics through theories that emphasize historical structures, political institutions, and democratic politics. Fourth, we consider cultural contexts of politics, including social capital, ethnic identity, and civil society, and we explore different explanations for the emergence of social movements. Fifth, we conclude with a discussion of democratization, analyzing the Arab spring in the context of existing theory and new concepts such as “hybrid” regimes. The final exam will concentrate mostly on this last course unit.

These required texts are in the AU bookstore:
- A subscription to The New York Times.
- Required readings posted on Blackboard are noted with an *asterisk* below.

If you are new to academic research on international relations, I recommend books such as International Relations Theories (3rd edition), edited by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve

Course Requirements:
The assignments include a discussion group post, two short analytical papers, a literature review, and a final exam. During an ideal class meeting, every student will participate at least once. This means you should come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Participation comes in all forms: by posing questions to your classmates or to the professor, or by developing critical observations about the readings. Online participation is encouraged but is not a substitute for in class discussion. This counts for 10% of your final grade.

Instructions for the analytical papers are posted on Blackboard under “content.” Outside research is permitted for these papers but you will primarily be evaluated based on your command of course material. I strongly encourage students to form small study groups to meet regularly outside of class. Discuss the readings, debate the ideas, familiarize yourself with the terminology, and get to know each other. Each paper should be 5-6 pages long, plus bibliography. Come to class prepared to discuss your essay.

- Research question – Pick a topic of your choosing and utilize the readings from Part 1 of the course to formulate a research question in a post of 300-400 words. Post your question to the Blackboard blog on September 9, the day before class meets. We will collectively view and discuss some of the questions during class (10% of final grade).
- Analytical paper on “Politics, Power, Development” – due on October 9 at 5 pm via Blackboard upload (20% of final grade).
- Analytical paper on “States, Structures, Agency” – due on October 30 at 5 pm via Blackboard upload (20% of final grade).
- Literature review on “Society, Identity, Culture” – Pick a topic related to the theories and concepts discuss in Part 4 of the course, and assess the state of existing research on the subject. Unlike the analytical papers, you have a lot of latitude with your topic so be sure to choose one that excites you. However, before you begin I strongly encourage you to consult my tips and suggestions about how to do a literature review, posted at http://carllevan.com/teaching/student-resources/. Because this is a literature review rather than a full research paper, you do not have to test a hypothesis or “prove” a thesis. The best papers will identify a clever topic with a clearly delimited scope, bring in interesting research and situate it appropriately, and be organized around a coherent and compelling logical structure that shows evidence of careful editing. The papers should be 8-12 double-spaced pages with one-inch margins, plus end notes. Please slip a hardcopy under my office door on November 20 by 5 pm. Double-sided printing is appreciated (20% of final grade).
- An in-class exam, focusing mostly on Part 5, on December 10 at 5:30 (20% of final grade).

Papers are graded on the following scale: 100 to 94 is an A, 93 to 90 is an A-; 89 to 87 is a B+, 86 to 83 is a B, 82 to 80 is a B-, etc. If you anticipate missing an assignment deadline due to a medical or other emergency, please notify the instructor before the due date. Late papers will be penalized. All papers must follow a standard formatting style such as Chicago, APSA or MLA. Please see my website for additional information: http://carllevan.com/wp-
content/uploads/2010/02/Style-guide-for-papers-Spring-2011.pdf. The University’s Academic Integrity Code will be strictly enforced. For information see: http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm. Do not browse, email, text, etc. during class! Not only is this rude, a fair amount of scientific research (summarized on my web page) reports that we cannot multi-task as well as we think we can.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

(1) Course Overview (September 3)
Lichbach and Zukerman, Chapter 1: “Paradigms and Pragmatism” in L&Z.
Weber, Max. 1918. “Politics as a Vocation” and “Science as a Vocation” online at: http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/DSS/Weber/polvoc.html
http://www.sociosite.net/topics/texts/weber_science_as_a_profession.php

(2) Social Theory and Social Science (September 10)
Katzenelson, Ira. Chapter 4: “Strong Theory, Complex History,” in L & Z.

Recommended:

PART 2: STATES, STRUCTURES, AND AGENCY

(3) The State (September 17)
Migdal, Joel. Chapter 7: “Researching the State,” in L & Z.

Recommended:

(4) Realism and Neo-Realism in International Relations (September 24)


And read one of the following:


Recommended Reading:

(5) “Realist Constructivism” as Theoretical Synthesis (October 1)
Barkin. Realist Constructivism. You can skim chapters 8 and 9.

PART 3: POLITICS, POWER, AND DEVELOPMENT

(6) Modernization Theory and Dependency Theory (October 8)


Recommended:


(7) Institutions and Incentives (October 15)
Levi, Margaret. Chapter 5: “Reconsiderations of Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis,” in L & Z.


Recommended:


(8) **Term limits and as Institutional Constraints** (October 22)

**GUEST LECTURE:** Aaron Sampson, Visiting SIS Fellow 2015-16


**PART 4: SOCIETY, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE**

(9) **Political Culture** (October 29)

Ross, Marc Howard. Chapter 6: “Culture in Comparative Political Analysis,” in L & Z.

* de Tocqueville, Alexis. Introduction to *Democracy in America*.


Recommended:


(10) **Ethnicity** (November 5)


(11) **Civil Society and Social Movements** (November 12)

McAdam, Doug et al. Chapter 10: “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” in L&Z.


Brownlee et al. 2015. Introduction and Chapter 1
Recommended:

**PART 5: COMPARATIVE DEMOCRATIZATION**

(12) **The Arab Spring** (November 19)
**GUEST LECTURE:** Tofigh Maboudi, PhD Candidate, School of Public Affairs
Brownlee et al. Chapters 2 – 5.

Recommended:

⇒ NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Holiday, November 26

(13) **Democratization, Foreign Policy, Global Politics** (December 3)
Brownlee et al. Chapter 6

Recommended:
FINAL EXAM ON DECEMBER 10

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.