G53.1500: COMPARATIVE POLITICS

This course, an introduction to the study of comparative politics for Ph.D students, examines the purpose and methodology of comparative inquiry. Designed to introduce students to the study of comparative politics and to assist students in developing research topics and strategies, the course surveys a range of methodological approaches and explores key themes -- the origins of political regimes and other institutions, the politics of redistribution, and the logic of collective action -- through the critical reading and discussion of classic, contemporary, and unpublished works, supplemented with contemporary readings on social science methods.

Class Meeting: Tuesday 2:00- 4:00

Office Hours: Tuesday 4:30 - 6:30 (sign up on office door, except for September 17 11-12:30, September 24 12-1 and 6:30-7:30, and November 26 11-1), Rm. 415, Politics Department, 715 Broadway, 998-8534

Email address: ew2@nyu.edu.

Requirements:

1. Reviews of the reading. For six of the weeks of the course each participant will write a short review of the week's reading or a subset of the reading. Reviews should include a concise summary of the argument and evidence, should assess its strengths and weaknesses, and raise questions for discussion. Consider questions such as: What comparative strategy or design is employed? What precisely is being compared? Is there an identified set of comparative cases? Is the comparison explicit, and if so how were the cases selected? Is there an implicit comparative design? Does the work principally generate ideas, test causal hypotheses, or develop theory, or some combination of these? Does the author appear to believe the conclusions of the study are generalizable? What evidence is presented that is said to confirm or disconfirm the author’s argument? Can you suggest a further or better way to evaluate the author’s claims?

Reviews should be two (not more) single-spaced pages. One copy of the review should be left in the instructor’s mailbox by 6:00 p.m. Monday. Another copy should be sent by email to the instructor and the class.

2. Writing assignment. Two short papers (8-12 pages) that further explore two themes of the course. Participants are required to submit an initial outline and bibliography at least a week before the paper is due. Alternatively, the student may choose to write a single research paper on a topic approved by the instructor, or to submit a final exam (distributed with this syllabus) at the end of the course.
3. Class presentation. Participants will make occasional short presentations of the week’s reading to the class. Each presentation (no more than 10 minutes) should briefly summarize the argument and assess the work’s strengths and weaknesses, addressing questions similar to those listed above under the description of reviews.

Course Materials:

Books available for purchase at the NYU Book Center:

Elisabeth Wood. *Forging Democracy from Below*
Carles Boix. *Political Parties, Growth and Equality*
Jeff Goodwin. *No Other Way Out.*
David D. Laitin. *Identity in Formation.*

Books recommended for purchase:

Gary King, et. al. *Designing Social Inquiry.*
Wayne Booth, et.al., *The Craft of Research*

Course Outline

I. September 10. Introduction

II. September 17. Mill's Method of Difference


recommended:


**III. September 24. Mill's Method of Agreement**


Recommended:


**IV. October 1. Combining Mill’s methods: state formation**


Recommended:


**V. October 8. Comparative Method, Design and Theory**


Recommended:


VI. October 15. Politics of redistribution in advanced democracies I.


Due: abstract, outline, and bibliography for first paper.

Recommended (mostly redistribution in developing countries):


**VII. October 22. Politics of redistribution in advanced democracies II.**


Due: first paper.

Recommended:


**VIII. October 29. Collective action and society: revolutionary mobilization**


Recommended:


Claus Offe and Helmut Wiesenthal. Two Logics of Collective Action: theoretical notes on social class and organizational form. *Political Power and Social Theory* 1, 1980.


**IX. November 5. Collective action and the state: revolutions**


Recommended:

**X. November 12. Ethnic politics and collective identity**


Recommended:


**XI. November 19. Electoral politics, collective identity, and ethnic political mobilization**


Recommended:


**XII. November 26. Electoral politics and ethnic mobilization**


Due: abstract, outline, and bibliography of second paper.

Recommended:


**XIII. December 3. Civil War Violence**


Recommended:


**XIV. December 10. Conclusion**


Recommended:

Second paper due December 16 by 10 a.m. by email attachment.