Introduction to Comparative Politics
Government 131  Spring 09

T-Th 11:40-12:55P  URH G01
Professor Ronald Herring
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Website: http://www.blackboard.cornell.edu/

Syllabus

Course Objectives: We seek to learn tools and theory that allow us to think comparatively. In a way, we will be exploring the social-science version of the common rhetorical point: “you can’t compare apples and oranges.” Actually, you can; both are fruits, grow on trees, have seeds inside, but differ in other, perhaps important, ways – like cost or phyto-nutrient content. Comparing apples to apples may not tell us much, comparing apples to goldfish may tell us nothing at all – there is just difference. We seek comparative logics that serve social-science inquiry.

Comparative strategies are common in political rhetoric: one hears “our health-care system is the most expensive among industrialized nations and we have among the worst health outcomes” e.g. Is the comparison valid? Any sensible person would want to know the terms of comparison, the comparability of the systems, and, as Donald Rumsfeld famously said, the metric. Comparative analysis as method derives from and informs theory in the social sciences and feeds into policy choices: “will a model of democracy in Iraq spread to make the Middle East a safer neighborhood?” How would we know? How does democracy spread? Can armies make democracies? Comparative inquiry is especially powerful in identifying mechanisms of causation and frequently leads to conditional findings: there are conditions under which rapid economic growth may aggravate ethnic conflict. We think of findings as probabilistic rather than determinative, much like science in environmental policy discussions, or a physician’s explanation of treatment options.

Evaluation: There will be one prelim that counts for 20% of the final grade; a case-study journal due on the final day of class, checked periodically, will account for another 20%. Performance in section will account for 20%, the final examination for 40%.

Texts: Available at The Campus Store and on reserve at Uris.

Aravind Adiga, The White Tiger
Amy Chua, World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Insecurity
Elizabeth Economy, The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China’s Future
John Kingdon, America the Unusual
Ryszard Kapuscinski, The Emperor

Robert Paarlberg, *Starved for Science: How Biotechnology is Being Kept Out of Africa*

**Getting Started: The Journal Requirement**

Every student will choose a society to follow all semester. Becoming grounded in a particular place will make help you grasp the abstractions in the theory we will be reading. Choose a society other than one you consider your own. If you have not grown up in the United States, it makes a good case. Learn about the case via whatever tools seem compatible with your learning style. The web is the most efficient source, but capricious: there is a lot of junk. Try the CIA World Fact Book [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html). For the data hounds, [hdr.undp.org/en/countries/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/) presents the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Report data bases, primarily for countries considered poor by global standards on indices considered important for development [infant mortality, life expectancy, etc]. The World Bank provides not only country-level data on a wide range of economics and social indicators, but also links to current reports on governance and political issues, with background information on history. [http://web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/0,,pagePK:180619~sitePK:136917,00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/0,,pagePK:180619~sitePK:136917,00.html). The *Economist* has both current news and basic comparative data: [http://www.economist.com/countries/](http://www.economist.com/countries/). You can find data and links on economic and political freedom from Freedom House’s country indices: [http://www.freedomhouse.org/](http://www.freedomhouse.org/). Transparency International [http://www.transparency.org/] ranks countries comparatively by an index of corruption. Comparative public opinion data can be found through Eurobarometer [http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/eurobarometer](http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/eurobarometer). If you are especially interested in repression and human rights, see Amnesty International’s country reports: [http://web.amnesty.org/library/engworld/2am](http://web.amnesty.org/library/engworld/2am). There are other possibilities you can discuss in section. Track how the press treats events in your case, how the case relates to the larger generalizations our readings make. Keep a diary of these notes: thoughts and queries, conclusions.

The journal exercise is to facilitate engagement with readings. The graded part of the journal will be 5 short entries (2-3 pp each) responsive to questions posted on this syllabus. These papers will be due the week they are assigned and discussed in section.

**Optional Reading:** Periodic suggestions will be made in class and on the syllabus for additional depth/sophistication for those so inclined. Optional reading on the syllabus specifically will be available for purchase in the bookstore and in the reserve reading room.

**Intellectual Show and Tell:** Everyone is encouraged to bring to the attention matters of relevance to what we are studying: a lecture, film, news item, public debate, new study. The instructors will attempt to do the same.
Course Schedule

Week of January 20: Comparative Politics: Theories, Frameworks, Methods

Introduction to 1313: Why We Do Comparative Social Science?
Logics of Comparison: Explanation

Reading: Chua: 1-21; O and R: 1-6 [Lichbach and Zucherman], 457-73
[Fukuyama], 474-80 [Hoffman]
Optional Reading O and R 6-28.
Browse heavily the recommended websites or other sources to select a society to
follow for the semester. Peruse texts before choosing. Declare in section January 27
week. Reading about your case is part of the course reading assignment.

Week of January 27: Typologies, Exceptionalism and Puzzles: America the Unusual
How Do High-Income Democracies Differ?
What Role Does History Play? Path Dependence as Explanation

Reading: Kingdon: entire

Week of February 3: Systemic Differences I: Comparative Political Economy—Who
Gets What and How?
The Three Inescapable Economic Questions
Liberalization: Moving Boundaries Between States and Markets

Reading: O and R: 127-156 [Smith, Ricardo, Economist, North,
Alesina/Glaeser/Sacerdote]; 351-365 [Marx/Engels]; Adiga 1-36

Writing assignment 1: If you had to choose one explanation for American
exceptionalism on one dimension, which would it be and why?

Week of February 10: Growth, Development, and Social Justice
Meanings of Development
Patterns and Politics of Development

Reading: O and R: 400-456 [Easterly, Pritchett, Economist, Collier/Gunning, Barro,

Week of February 17: Systemic Differences II: Democracies and Variants
Why is India Democratic and Pakistan Not?
How Democratic is India? Implications of the ‘Kerala Model’

O and R: 229-305 [Zakaria, Schmitter/Karl; Lijphart; Putnam; Berman]; Adiga 96-147.

Week of February 24: Systematic Differences III: Dictatorships and
Authoritarianisms

Where is Leviathan When We Need It? The Tragedy of the Commons
Are Authoritarian States Strong? China’s Environmental Politics

Readings: O and R: 167-228 [Linz/Stepan; Diamond; Snyder/Ballentine; Fish]; Economy 1-57

Writing Assignment 2: Are dictatorships or democracies more capable of meeting environmental challenges?

Week of March 3: Review of Concepts and Cases; Prelim

The Prelim is Scheduled for March 5

Week of March 10: Systemic Transitions: How Does Concentrated Power Fail?
Electoral Revolutions
Bringing Down a Dictator

Reading: Kapuscinski, entire
Optional Readings: O and R: 371-180 [Bunce]

Week of March 17: Spring Break!

Reading: Pulp Fiction

Week of March 24: System Maintenance: Why Do Some Democracies and Dictatorships Persist and Others Do Not?
Ideology, Patronage, and Collective Action
Taxes and System Stability

Writing assignment 3: The White Tiger gives the Chinese Premier several reasons for the inability of India’s poor and marginalized to change systems that keep them down; which seems most powerful to you, based on other readings?

Readings: O and R: 508-526 [Skocpol]; 69-78 [Hobsbawm]; Adiga 147-276

Week of March 31-April 2: Globalization and its Discontents: Social Movements and Protest Politics
FrankenFoods and Monopoly Power: The War on GMOs
Contesting Economic Science: Neo-liberalism and Protest in Latin America
Readings: Chua 23-126; Paarlberg: 1-46; 111-148; 179-195; O and R 480-491
[Galbraith]

Week of April 7 \textit{The Politics of Contentious Knowledge: Epistemic Brokers}
\textit{Bulls*st the Movie}
The Science and Politics of Risk: Does Development Require Environmental Degradation?

Readings: Economy 59-174

\textit{Week of April 14 Primordial Loyalties: Ethno-nationalism, Ethnic Politics, Ethnic Conflict}
The Crash of a Developmental Model: Lessons from Sri Lanka’s Civil War
Identity Politics and Cultures of Solidarity

Readings: O and R: 29-30; 37-46 [Juergensmeyer]; 61-69 [Rotberg]; Chua 127-258

\textbf{Writing Assignment 4: Is Amy Chua’s notion of “free market democracy” responsible for “ethnic hatred and global instability”?}

\textit{Week of April 21: Political Violence}
Greed and Grievance
Instrumental and Expressive Interests


\textit{Week of April 28: Futures}
The Politics of Science: Human Interests and Cognitive Screens
How Might Contending Theories Be Reconciled?

Readings: Economy 177-274; Chua: 259-294; O and R: 508-09; 527-566 [Crenshaw, Margalit/Buruma, Goldstone]

\textbf{Writing Assignment 5: Do any of the theoretical dispositions discussed in 1313 – rational choice, institutional, cultural, structural – suggest that terrorism can be controlled or eliminated as political praxis?}

\textit{Last Day of Class is April 30}

\textbf{Final Examination: Thursday, May 7 7:00 - 9:30 pm}