Objectives

This seminar is designed to help students prepare for the comprehensive examination in comparative politics and to provide them with some of the concepts and tools necessary to carry out further research in this field, including doctoral dissertations. Though this seminar covers a wide range of topics, it is simply impossible to cover all the pertinent questions in comparative politics in a single class. Rather than superficially skim many topics, we shall examine a limited set of problems and focus on the research methodologies involved. The idea behind this choice is that it is better to develop speculations about how the world works in a scientific manner than it is to be able to recall what everyone has previously said on a topic. Nonetheless, students preparing for the comprehensive exam should seek additional opportunities to study some of the topics not covered in this class. These include political development, mass behavior, and public policy.

Format

Seminar meetings are scheduled for the ten teaching weeks of the quarter. Each week will introduce a new theme in the comparative study of political institutions. For each theme, the reading list distinguishes between different types of readings. Items under Read provide general introductions to particular topics and will form the basis of the general seminar discussions; those under Study will be explained in class: both types of readings are required. All students should read them carefully and critically before class. Recommended comprises additional readings of broad
theoretical importance, with which students preparing for the comprehensive exam should gain some familiarity. These readings are also suitable for literature review papers, though they are by no means an exhaustive list of such readings. Background includes some classical pieces and “contiguous” readings that you may find useful if you would like to learn more about a particular topic. If possible, you should approach the material in the order indicated. You may find it helpful to reread the material after it was discussed in class.

I have tried to limit the number of readings each week. I want us to focus on the key concepts of the arguments made, the logic used, the falsifiability of the argument and how the arguments are tested. There is a strong focus on articles by people at UCSD and the sort of topics they research. This is not an accident, nor a fake attempt to eulogize their work. First, I honestly believe that these are some of the most important developments in the field (as testified –and validated – by the Department’s ranking). Second, it helps UCSD students identify the research interests of our faculty.

Class sessions will be conducted as seminars. Each week we will center our discussion around a particular model of interest. A brief comment regarding models is in order. As Henri Theil observed, “Models should be used, not believed” (cited in Paper Stones by Przeworski and Sprague). And, as these authors note, models “...are not simplified versions of a complex reality but instruments to be used in analyzing complex situations...” In fact, it will often be the case that a few simplistic assumptions will not be sufficient to reconstruct the complexity of some of the topics covered in this class. And, while we should not necessarily expect our models to fit each and every aspect of reality, we should revise or abandon a theory if it does not withstand a confrontation with our empirical observations. Therefore, it is very important that you learn how to evaluate a model, from its overall logic to its constituent assumptions. In other words, you should be able to “dismantle” a model and put it back together.

The pace of this course will be fast and some of the models will be quite complex. You should not be discouraged by this. In most cases, understanding these models will take patience more than anything else. Nonetheless, some basic knowledge of economics (with calculus), some game theory and some statistics (OLS) will come in handy.
Assignments

Each week students are expected to read the materials, study a model, and take a look at the recommended literature (as indicated in this syllabus). Students will be assigned to lead the discussion of the readings. These presentations should center on a particular model of interest, including a brief characterization (causal mechanism, parameters, solution concept, etc.), a critical review (What assumptions does it make? Are they justified? What does it leave out or fail to explain?), and a general overview placing the model in the context of the other readings of the week. Students giving presentations should prepare a short outline for distribution to the other seminar participants. Further information will be given in class.

In addition, each student needs to write two short papers (1-3 pages) and take a final examination. The short papers should focus on any problems in logic or evidence in a particular week’s reading(s). The emphasis should be on the way in which hypotheses are developed, the fundamental elements of research design, how the research question can be better examined. In addition, it should offer concrete and feasible ideas about how to improve on the research. These papers should not be summaries of the readings or other forms of surveys of the literature. I want you to think about how you would do research. You should do one of the papers on weeks 2-4, and the other one on weeks 5-7. The format of the final exam will be similar to the one of the comprehensive examination in comparative politics.

Grades will be based on course assignments in the following way: short papers 20% each, final exam 40%, discussion and general participation 20%. Extensions, incompletes, etc. will be given in accordance with UCSD policy. Except under very pressing circumstances, they will be discouraged.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. Students in this course are expected to comply with UCSD’s Policy on Integrity of Scholarship. In particular, plagiarism is considered a dishonest practice and a serious academic offense. Hence, there will be a zero tolerance policy with respect to these practices: any student violating the obligation of academic integrity during the term will automatically fail the class. Copies of the current version of the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, also commonly referred to as the Academic Dishonesty Policy, may be found on the Academic Senate webpage: http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/AcademicIntegrity/AcademicIntegrity.htm
Disabilities. If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify the OSD, call (858) 534-4382 to schedule an appointment.

Course Materials

Most of the readings consist of articles that are available off the Web through the UCSD Library System. However, there are a few books containing course readings. I have not made arrangements for these books to be available in the bookstore, but they are easily available online. I suggest trying www.bestbookbuys.com to view most online book retailers with a comparison of prices and shipping options. Copies of other articles (i.e. book chapters, non-electronic journal articles) will be put in a designated folder in the graduate student lounge in the Department of Political Science, so that students can make their own copies.

Course Outline and Readings

Week 1 (January 8): The Study of Institutions

Study:


Read:

Avner Greif. Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Chs. 1, 2, and 5.


Recommended:


Background:


*Week 2 (January 15): Public and Private Orderings*

**Study:**


**Read:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**


Avner Greif, Paul Milgrom, and Barry Weingast, “Coordination, Commit-

Avner Greif, “Contract Enforceability and Economic Institutions in Early

Frederic C. Lane, “Consequences of Organized Violence,” *Journal of Economic

Lucy Mair. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. New York: Oxford Uni-
versity Press, 1972, Chs. 7, 10, and 11.


180.

Press, Chs. 2, and 11.

Week 3 (January 22): Institutions and Collective Decision Making

**Study:**

Allan H. Meltzer, and Scott F. Richard, “A Rational Theory of the Size of

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship
and Democracy* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Ch. 4.

**Read:**

Adam Przeworski. *States and Markets*. Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2003, Chs. 1 and 5.

Press, 2000, Ch. 2.

Allan Drazen. *Political Economy in Macroeconomics* New Jersey: Princeton
University Press, 2000, Ch. 3.
Recommended:


Background:


**Week 4 (January 29): Democracy and Dictatorship**

**Study:**


**Read:**


Recommended:


Background:


**Week 5 (February 5): Electoral Institutions and Political Competition**

**Study:**


**Read:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**


Week 6 (February 12): “Horizontal” Separation of Powers

Study:


Read:


Recommended:


Tasos Kalandrakis, “A Theory of Minority and Majority Governments,” unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, *University of Rochester*.


Background:


**Week 7 (February 19): “Vertical” Separation of Powers**

**Study:**


**Read:**


Recommended:


Background:


Week 8 (February 26): Delegation & Accountability

Study:


Read:


Recommended:


Background:


**Week 9 (March 4): Institutions and Economic Performance**

**Study:**


**Read:**


**Recommended:**


**Background:**


**Week 10 (March 11): Institutions - Developing World**


