

## PS4: Introduction to Comparing Political Systems

Lecture Schedule: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11-12:30 AM  
Lecture Location: Encina Hall, Room 202  
Instructor: Jonathan Rodden  
Email: [jrodden@stanford.edu](mailto:jrodden@stanford.edu)  
Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00 – 3:00 PM  
Office Location: Encina Central, Room 444

Teaching Assistant: Kennedy Opalo  
Email: [kopalo@stanford.edu](mailto:kopalo@stanford.edu)

### 1. Introduction to the Course

This course will provide an overview of the most basic questions in the comparative study of political systems, and will introduce the analytical tools that can help us answer them. By the end of the course, students will understand contemporary research on the most central theoretical and empirical questions in comparative politics: Why have some countries developed and maintained democratic systems, while others have not? What are the consequences of democracy for economic development and other social outcomes? Among democracies, how do institutions and social cleavages interact to shape the nature of representation? What explains cross-country and within-country variations in fiscal policies, redistribution, and the provision of public goods?

The focus is on large themes and analytical tools rather than in-depth studies of specific countries or historical periods. Students will gain some basic familiarity with techniques like game theory, experiments, and quantitative analysis. Students will get their hands on data, and see how it can be used to evaluate theoretical arguments.

Our overview will be guided by a textbook, *Principles of Comparative Politics*, by William Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. The textbook will be supplemented with academic articles that present results of relevant empirical research. Since this course serves as a springboard to other courses in comparative politics at Stanford, we will focus in particular on articles published by Stanford professors.

### 2. Requirements

Students are required to attend lectures and discussion sections. Both types of meetings will often cover material that is not in the textbook. Please prepare for both lectures and section meetings so that you can ask and answer questions about the readings. The format for the “lectures” will involve considerable discussion. Slides and lecture notes will not be posted online.

Graded assignments include:

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|----------------------------|-----|
| 1) Homework Assignment I:  | 5%  |
| 2) Homework assignment II: | 10% |
| 3) In-class midterm:       | 20% |
| 4) Analytical assignment:  | 25% |
| 5) Final Examination:      | 25% |
| 6) Participation           | 15% |

### 3. Materials

The following books are available for purchase at the campus book store:

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2009. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Congressional Quarterly Press.

Pollock, Philip III. 2011. *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis* (second edition). Congressional Quarterly Press.

STATA is available on many campus computers, and a 1-year license for small STATA 11 can also be purchased by Stanford students through the university for \$29. Go to this web page:

<https://itservices.stanford.edu/service/softwarelic/stata/order>

Click on "order information" and then "gradplan Method 3."

Papers, book chapters, and other additional reading materials, along with some data sets, will be available on the coursework site.

### 4. Detailed Schedule

#### *Part 1: Building Blocks*

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| January 3  | Lecture: Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Principles</i>, Chapter 1</li></ul>   |
| January 5  | Lecture: What is Science? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Principles</i>, Chapter 2</li></ul>   |
| January 6  | Section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Almond, Gabriel and Stephen Genco. 1977. "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics." <i>World Politics</i> 29(4): 489-522.</li><li>1) Discussion: Can there be a science of politics? What are the most important questions that should be addressed by political scientists? Are they more like Popper's "clocks" or "clouds"?</li><li>2) An introductory primer on game theory</li></ul> |
| January 10 | Lecture: What is Politics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Principles</i>, Chapter 3</li><li>- Riker, William and Peter Ordeshook. 1973. <i>An Introduction to Positive Political Theory</i>. Prentice-Hall. Chapter 1.</li></ul>   |

January 12 Lecture: The State: Its Origins and Functions

- *Principles*, Chapter 4

Read quickly for the key arguments in each of the following:

- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa*. Chapter 1 and conclusion.
- Centeno, Miguel. 2002. *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation State in Latin America*. Chapter 1.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75-90.

January 13 Section:

- 1) Continue discussion of the state, especially outside Western Europe. Some questions:
  - a. Why do some states seem to be "stronger" than others?
  - b. Is the European process of state-building unique?
  - c. What is the role of colonialism?
- 2) Further work on game theory

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 1 DISTRIBUTED ON JANUARY 14, DUE ON JANUARY 19 IN CLASS

January 17 NO CLASS, MLK DAY

*Part 2: Democracy and its Alternatives*

January 19 Conceptualizing and measuring democracy.

- *Principles*, Chapter 5.
- Karl, Terry Lynn and Philippe Schmitter. 1991. "What Democracy Is.. and is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2(3): 75-88.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 3.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE IN CLASS JANUARY 19

January 20 Section: Introduction to Stata, descriptive statistics, and simple comparisons

- *Stata Companion*, Chapters 1, 2, and 4

January 24 Lecture: Economic Development and Democracy

- *Principles*, Chapter 6.
- Ross, Michael Lewin. 2001. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53: 325-361.
- Haber, Stephen and Victor Menaldo. 2010. "Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism? A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse." Working paper, Stanford.

#### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE IN CLASS JANUARY 24:

Using the *world*, *states*, and *oil* data sets, do the following:

- Create a histogram of GDP per capita across countries. Create a histogram of per capita income across U.S. states. What do these distributions mean? Is income distributed more equally across U.S. states or across countries?
- Generate a bar chart that contrasts the GDP per capita of heavy oil exporters versus other countries. Do the same for two or three other variables in the *world* data set that correspond to arguments in the "resource curse" literature. What light might these bar charts shed on the resource curse? What might be wrong with this type of analysis?

January 26 Lecture: Culture and Democracy

- *Principles*, Chapter 7.

January 27 Section:

- 1) Further discussion of democracy, culture, and development
  - 2) Experiments in political science
- Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2007. "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101(4): 709-725.

January 31 Lecture: Democratic Transitions

- *Principles*, Chapter 8.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.

February 2 IN CLASS MIDTERM

February 3 Section: Does Democracy Make a Difference?

- *Principles*, Chapter 9, pages 311-331.

*Section 3: Varieties of Democracy*

- February 7      Lecture: Decision-making in democracies
- *Principles*, Chapter 10
- February 9      Lecture: Parliamentary and Presidential Democracy
- *Principles*, Chapter 11 and pages 742-760.
  - Bagehot, Walter. "The English Constitution: The Cabinet." In Arend Lijphart, ed, *Parliamentary versus Presidential Government*. Oxford, pages 66-71.
  - Wilson, Woodrow. "Committee or Cabinet Government?" In Arend Lijphart, ed, *Parliamentary versus Presidential Government*. Oxford, pages 72-74.
- February 10     Section:
- 1) Further discussion of executive-legislative relations
  - 2) Making and interpreting scatter plots
- *Stata Companion*, pages 139-147.
- February 14     Lecture: Elections and Electoral Systems.
- *Principles*, Chapter 12.
- February 16     Lecture: Social Cleavages and Party Systems.
- *Principles*, Chapter 13.
  - de la O, Ana and Jonathan Rodden. 2008. "Does Religion Distract the Poor? Income and Issue Voting around the World." *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4-5): 437-76.
- February 17     Section: Why are some cleavages politicized and not others?
- Posner, Daniel. 2004. "The Political Salience of Culture Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98: 529-545.
- UNGRADED HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT DUE FEBRUARY 17: MAKE A SCATTERPLOT (ANY TWO CONTINUOUS VARIABLES THAT ARE OF INTEREST TO YOU)
- February 21     NO CLASS, PRESIDENT'S DAY
- February 23     Lecture: Federalism, Bicameralism, and the Judiciary

- *Principles*, Chapter 14
- Rodden, Jonathan. 2006. "The Political Economy of Federalism." In Barry Weingast and Donald Witman, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*.

February 24 Section: Discussion of analytical assignment

#### ANALYTICAL ASSIGNMENT DUE FEBRUARY 24

Using one of the online data sets or any other data of interest, generate a scatterplot that relates to a comparative politics theory that interests you. Answer the following questions:

- What is the theory that inspired this graph?
- What do we learn from this graph about the theory?
- What are some reasons for skepticism about the usefulness of this graph?
- Take a closer look at one of the cases that does not fit the theory. Explain why it does not fit.
- With a larger amount of time and resources, what would be a better way to test the theory?

Write 1-2 paragraphs in response to each question, around 3-4 pages total.

February 28 Lecture: Consequences of Democratic Institutions, Part I: Representation and Fiscal Policy

- *Principles*, Chapter 15, pages 675-724.

March 2 Lecture: Consequences, Part II: Redistribution

- Aleseina, Alberto, Edward Glaeser, and Bruce Sacerdote. 2001. "Why Doesn't the U.S. Have a European-Style Welfare State? HIER Paper No. 1933.

March 3 Section: Consequences, Part III: Institutions and Ethnic Conflict

- *Principles*, Chapter 15, pages 723-742.

March 7 TBA

March 9 Final Lecture: Review and Wrap-up

FINAL EXAM WILL COVER ONLY MATERIALS FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THE COURSE, AND WILL TAKE PLACE DURING EXAM PERIOD