COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is an introductory “core” course in comparative politics, intended for MA and PhD students in political science. This course will survey major topics and the most important theoretical and conceptual building blocks in the sub-field of comparative politics. In particular, this seminar will examine: the formation and development of the modern state; democracy; authoritarianism; revolution and political stability; nationalism; political culture; voters and parties; constitutional arrangements and their effects and macro theories of political change.

The course proceeds thematically, with participants discussing a subset of the pertinent scholarly literature every week. Discussion should focus on a major theoretical or empirical controversy. Key methodological issues are addressed in the context of each theme. The emphasis will be placed on causality and finding out what makes for good and convincing arguments.

The course is a graduate seminar, which means that class time will be devoted exclusively to the discussion of the assigned readings, rather than to lecturing. Participants should read the assigned material for the week before class. We will focus on certain key elements in conducting and evaluating social science analyses. In particular, we will consider:

- Identifying central issues and key debates;
- The importance of theory/model development based on clearly-drawn mechanisms;
- Generating testable implications;
- Linking hypotheses and theory;
- The importance of assumptions;
- Evaluating the main theoretical strengths and weaknesses of major studies;
- Effective approaches to presenting your work;

Class will meet every Thursday from 9h00 to 11h00 in PR 115B (RU42OG1.115b) starting October 3 2019 until 30.01.2020. This seminar and its evaluation will be conducted in English. I will make the additional materials you will need for this course available on the portal blackboard, within the limits of legality, of course. Since the recommended literature is large, the burden of procuring some of the readings will be on you.

COURSE SCHEDULE
1. 3 October: Organizational Session and Introduction
2. 10 October: The State
3. 17 October: Political Order and Regime Emergence
4. 24 October: Regimes and Democratization
5. 7 November: Political Instability, Violence, Revolutions
6. 14 November: Nationalism
7. 21 November: Political Culture
8. 28 November: Civil Society
9. 5 December: Institutions and Institutional Analysis
10. 12 December: Elections, Electoral Systems and Voting
11. 19 December: Political Parties and Party Systems
12. 9 January: Presidentialism and executives
13. 16 January: Parliamentary Systems and Legislatures
14. 23 January: Varieties of Democracies and Consequences
15. 30 January: Women and/in Politics

Sprechstunde:
By appointment

REQUIREMENTS:
The following is required of all students enrolled in this course:
1) To attend all class meetings;
2) To do all required readings;
3) To participate actively in the class discussions;
4) To prepare weekly short handouts;
5) To select by October 17 one of 2 tracks;

Grade breakdown:
- Participation: 30%
- Weekly handouts: 10%
- Track option total: 60%

Weekly Short Reviews
(MA Students one each week, BA students = 6)
These should be concise reviews of the current week’s required readings. Keep them to one/two page, single-spaced maximum. Your short reviews do not need to be in a continuous text form, they can be a series of points. These are due in class each week, beginning on October 10. Because they are meant to encourage you to think about the readings before you come to class, no late reviews will be accepted. If you chose track 1, you do not have to submit a “weekly short review” if you submit a discussion paper.

In your reviews, you should:
1. Summarize the main arguments of the readings for the week. What are the readings about? How do they relate to each other? (Keep this part short – half of the page, maximum)
2. Critique the readings – consider methodology, logic, biases, omissions, etc. Do the authors prove what they propose convincingly? Why or why not?
3. Identify at least 3 questions that you would like to discuss in class.

TRACK 1: Series of discussion papers (60%)
Master students with 6 ECTS: 5 Discussion Papers + Discussion leadership
BA students: 4 Discussion Papers

Discussion Leadership
You will serve as the class discussion leader once during the semester. After I give a short, general overview of the week’s topic, we will discuss the readings individually. You will briefly (in 2-3 minutes) introduce each reading by reminding the class of the author’s main argument and the method(s) he/she uses to support that argument. Then you will lead the discussion by raising questions about the readings. Think of this as an extension of your one-page review – deal with the same issues, but in more detail.
Discussion papers

Discussion papers are about 7-8 pages each, and focus on at least 4 of the weekly readings (your pick among required or recommended). The papers should be literature reviews of the readings with a twist. That is, they present a sketch of the major theories (explanations) and the results of your own assessment, focused around a question of your choice (think about something to really unite the readings to a common theme, some time that could be asked at an MA exam, for example). Some of the best examples of this type of literature review of several books appear in World Politics and The Annual Review of Political Science. You may want to look at some of review essays in journals before you write your own. You should address the 3 following points.

1) What are the authors trying to demonstrate? Summarize the arguments using the following criteria:
   a. What are the main hypotheses defended by the authors? Are there sub-hypotheses?
   b. What are the main variables? What is the theoretical argument that links the variables?
   c. What level of analysis is used? (Micro or macro) Who performs the action: people, institutions, states?
   d. What is the type of analysis used (Deductive/inductive)
   e. What kind of method is the author employing? (Case studies, comparison of many cases, qualitative, quantitative, a mix of methods)

2) Evaluate the theory: are these pieces of literature convincing? Below are some examples of evaluation criteria to help you make your point. You do not need to deal with all these items at once, just those you feel are relevant to your argument.
   a. Originality: new findings? New theory?
   b. Simplicity/parsimony (uses many or few variables to make a point?)
   c. Coherent/internally consistent (no propositions that contradict each other)
   d. pertinent/useful (you can apply this to real world cases)
   e. Predictive (you can make predictions using this theory, and if the predictions coming from it are validated by facts)
   f. Is this generalizable to many cases/countries, or just applicable to a single/few cases?
   g. Does it seem normative or objective? (Do the authors speak about how things are in the real world, or how things should be?)
   h. Are the variables adequately conceptualized and operationalized? Are the concepts clear? Were the measures chosen to evaluate concepts adequate?
   i. Was the choice of design acceptable, or could you recommend a better way to test the theory?

3) What links the articles together? Which of the theories proposed is most adequate and why, at least with respect to the question you have posed. Keep in mind that mature scholarship asks not so much whether someone is right or wrong but under what kinds of circumstances a theory is useful... What do we know about a particular topic, what do we still need to find out?

Papers are due no later than class time. I cannot accept late papers because that would put those who complied with the deadline at a disadvantage (e.g. after the class discussion on the topic). If you think you will fail to meet the deadline, then you should plan to submit a later paper. You have the control over which papers you choose to write, and that flexibility should be sufficient to make sure you plan your schedule so that all your deadlines do not coincide. You should write at least one paper before October 24th.

Note: This option makes most sense if you are not sure what you want to write your MA thesis on, but know that you will take the MA oral exam in comparative politics.

TRACK 2: Literature Review (60%) (Deadline February 24 2020)
Master students with 6 ECTS: 20 pages + written proposal
The literature review should be a synthesis on a topic you have negotiated with me, of course, related to this class (e.g. If you decide to write a literature review, you should meet with me to discuss the topic). Your paper should examine the relevant literature with a critical viewpoint regarding theoretical and empirical developments. You should discuss the strengths and limitations of methodological or conceptual conventions in that literature, as well as the importance and relevance of the questions around which it is organized. Your literature review should therefore have a critical core, and not just be descriptive. It goes without saying that I expect you to expand significantly on the required + recommended readings. Recommended readings may be a good start for further reading, but the review should not be limited to the readings in the syllabus. Be creative.

Note: This option makes most sense if you are thinking of writing a Master’s thesis on one of the topics.

You should submit a written proposal of what you intend to work on by November 14th.

READINGS
The reading load for this course will seem heavy at first sight. I have selected sections from a various amount of articles and books to cover topics in order to permit interesting comparisons and some disagreement on certain issues. The secret to cope with a bulk of reading is to skim strategically: Knowing how to skim readings is an important professional skill for students (you cannot realistically be expected to read ALL the materials for each class you are taking, right?). In most cases, you can skim the empirical details, especially if they are buried in complex formulas. For this, you need to read purposefully, and look out for the important “stuff” in a text:

- The central question or puzzle the author seeks to answer or resolve;
- The definition of the dependent variable, or what the author wants to explain;
- The main independent variables the author(s) thinks are at work;
- The theory, or the rationale, that links independent to dependent variables; why should certain things be related?
- The author’s research design: the types of evidence used to test hypotheses, where the evidence comes from, and if you are convinced by it all.

LATE PAPER POLICY
I understand that printers break, dogs/uncles/grandmas sometimes die, and hard drives often fail around final paper due dates. I will accept track 2 papers late, but each late day will cost you 5% of your grade. (Weekly review papers and discussion papers cannot be handed in late for the above cited reasons).

PLAGIARISM
A note on plagiarism. Full citations must be included for every source you utilize, including those you paraphrase even loosely. Citations must be included if you paraphrase another author, or if you use another’s ideas, even if not the exact words. You should select a standard citation style and stick to it. Lifting papers from the internet will be punished by a failing grade and reported to the appropriate authorities.

COURSE READINGS AND CONTENT:
WEEK 1 (3 October): Organizational Session and Introduction
Required Reading

WEEK 2 (10 October): The State

Required readings

Readings to go further
• Skocpol, Theda. 1985. "Bringing the State Back In," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.) Bringing the State Back In. New York: Cambridge University Press.

WEEK 3 (17 October): Political Orders and Regime Emergence

Required readings

Readings to go further (see also next week)

WEEK 4 (24 October): Regimes & Democratization

Required readings

Readings to go further

WEEK 5 (7 November): Political Instability, Violence, Revolutions
Required readings

Readings to go further
• Skocpol, Theda. 1979. States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 3-42, 161-171.

WEEK 6 (14 November): Nationalism
Required readings

Readings to go further

WEEK 7 (21 November): Political Culture
Required readings

Readings to go further
• Seligson, Mitchell. A. 2002. ‘The renaissance of political culture or the renaissance of the ecological fallacy?’ Comparative Politics. 34 (3): 273.

WEEK 8 (28 November): Civil Society and Social Capital
Required readings

Readings to go further


WEEK 9 (5 December): Institutions and Institutional Analysis

Required readings


Readings to go further


**WEEK 10 (12 December): Elections, Electoral Systems and Voting**

**Required readings**


**Readings to go further**


WEEK 11 (19 December): Political Parties and party systems

Required readings

Readings to go further

**WEEK 12 (9 January): Presidentialism and executives**

**Required readings**


**Readings to go further**


**WEEK 13 (16 January): Parliamentary Systems and Legislatures**

**Required readings**


Readings to go further

WEEK 14 (23 January): Varieties of Democracies and Consequences

Required readings
• Lijphart, Arend. 1999. Patterns of Democracy. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapters 1-3 (pp.9-47) and Chapters 14-17 (pp.243-308).

Readings to go further

WEEK 15 (30 January): Special topic: women and politics

Required readings

Readings to go further
• Falk, Erika and Kate Kenski. 2006. “Issue Saliency and Gender Stereotypes: Support for


