

**University of Washington**  
**Political Science**  
**Introduction to Comparative Politics**  
**POLS 204**

Spring Quarter 2012  
Lectures TTH 12:00 to 1:20 PM  
PACCAR Hall 192

Professor Victor Menaldo  
31 Gowen Hall  
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Office hours: Fridays 2:00-4:00 PM

**Course Description:**

Political science isn't rocket science. That's good, because rocket science is really hard! What's also good is that political science is great fun. Comparative politics is particularly fun because it's dedicated to exploring interesting puzzles about contemporary politics and political history by drawing on anthropology, sociology, and economics. Here are some of those puzzles:

- Why are most contemporary human societies sedentary, and what effect did the transition from nomadism have on politics and development?
- Why are today's polities organized as nation-states with clearly defined borders, rather than empires and city-states?
- Why do individuals organize themselves politically around ethnicity, language, religion, and ideology, and not around their hair color, their height, or their hobbies?
- Why has violence been so common in some countries and rare in others? For example, while Russia has been beset by several bloody civil wars since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States has only experienced one civil war over its 235 year history.

In this course, we will explore these and similar puzzles. What they share in common is that they're centered on variation in important social outcomes across both time and place. These include differences in constitutions, property rights systems, culture, political identity, the likelihood of political violence, political parties, regime types, bureaucratic politics, taxation policy, spending on social programs, and economic development. Therefore, addressing these puzzles will help us gain purchase on why political systems vary so much. Yet this exercise will also allow us to recognize the DNA of politics: how power is universally exercised to shape and control political, cultural, and economic institutions and, in turn, how these institutions generate policies that affect what we learn, what we earn, how long we live, and even who we are.

**Grading and Course Requirements:**

1. Quiz Sections (15%)

2. Exam I (25%): **Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**

Multiple Choice; Identification terms; Questions with short answers; Essay question.

3. Exam II (30%): **Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>**

Multiple Choice; Identification terms; Questions with short answers; Essay question.

4. Final paper (30%)

Students will write a short paper based on an analysis of the readings from class not to exceed 5 double-spaced pages in length (with reasonable margins and font size). Guidelines for the paper will be discussed and distributed in advance, before the due date. The paper itself is due on **Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>**. Unexcused late papers will not be accepted. Suffice it to say, plagiarism or cheating of any sort will not be tolerated.

### **Writing Link and Sections**

The teaching assistants and their email addresses are:

William d'Ambruoso: [dambruos@uw.edu](mailto:dambruos@uw.edu)

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### **Office Hours**

My office hours are Fridays from 2:00 to 4:00 PM in 31 Gowen Hall. TA Office hours will be announced in section meetings.

### **Course Materials**

None are required. I will email you all of the journal articles and papers that will be assigned as required readings.

### **Recommended Reading Strategy**

Before approaching each reading, think about what the key question is for the day and about how it relates to what you know from previous weeks. Then skim over the assigned reading to get a sense of what it covers and, before reading further, jot down what questions you hope the reading will be able to answer for you. Next, read the introduction and conclusion. This will give you a sense of the big picture. Ask yourself:

- 1) What is the text trying to do: what is the puzzle, pattern, or question it tries to explain?
- 2) In what way does the author's explanation differ from other possible explanations?
- 3) How does the author plan to go about explaining the outcome of importance – what is her research strategy?

Now read through the whole text carefully. Do you believe the explanation the author puts forth? Can you think of examples of places that do not seem consistent with the logic of the argument? If not, what types of evidence or arguments would you need to see in order to be convinced of the claims? Finally, are there alternative explanations that the author failed to consider, or, similarly, did she short shrift the alternative explanations that were identified?

It is very rare to find a piece of writing that convinces you entirely. So, as you come across issues that you are not sold on, identify them. Also note when you are pleasantly surprised; when the author produced a convincing argument that you had not thought of.

## **Course Schedule**

The following course schedule lists the required readings for each day and each lecture's topic.

### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

#### **TUESDAY March 27<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Meeting 1: Politics and Science*

- What is politics?
- What is science?
- What is political science?
- What is comparative politics?

#### **THURSDAY March 29<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Meeting 2: Human beings: the ultimate subject of comparative politics*

- 1) Chapais, "The Deep Social Structure of Humankind"
- 2) Hill et al., "Co-Residence Patterns in Hunter-Gatherer Societies Show Unique Human Social Structure"
- 3) North and Thomas, "The First Economic Revolution"

### WEEK 2: INSTITUTIONS

#### **Tuesday April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012**

*Institutions: origin and persistence*

- 1) Elster, "Forces and Mechanisms in the Constitution-Making Process"
- 2) Alcock, "Bargaining, Uncertainty, and Property Rights in Fisheries"

#### **Thursday April 5<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Informal institutions and institutional change*

- 1) Helmke and Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda”
- 2) Mackie, “Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account”

### WEEK 3: THE STATE & NATIONALISM

#### **Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*The origin, consolidation and strength of national states*

- 1) Krasner, “Sovereignty”
- 2) Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”
- 3) Herbst, “War and the State in Africa”

#### **Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Constructing nations and nationalism*

- 1) Anderson, “Imagined Communities, Chapter 4”
- 2) Forster, “Nationalism and the Invention of Tradition in Malawi”
- 3) Snyder and Bellentine, “Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas”

### WEEK 4: SUBNATIONAL IDENTITY

#### **Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*The Politicization of Subnational Identity*

- 1) Posner, “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference”
- 2) Fearon, “Why Ethnic Politics and Pork tend to go together”
- 3) Laitin, “Nations, States and Violence” (Lecture 1, pgs. 1.1-1.17)

#### **Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Political Parties and Ideology*

- 1) Hanson, “The Founding of the French Third Republic”
- 2) Iversen, “The Logics of Electoral Politics”

### WEEK 5: COLLECTIVE POLITICAL EXPRESSION

#### **Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Revolution and Civil War*

- 1) Finkel, Muller and Opp, “Personal Influence, Collective Rationality, and Mass Political Action”
- 2) Toft, “Getting Religion? The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War”

**Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup> 2012**

Review for Midterm Exam

**Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2012**

EXAM 1

WEEK 6: HIERARCHY AND AUTOCRACY

**Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2012**

*Bureaucracy and Corruption*

- 1) Moe, “The Politics of Structural Choice: Toward a Theory of Public Bureaucracy”
- 2) Darden, “The Integrity of Corrupt States: Graft as an Informal State Institution”

**Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012**

*Autocratic Patterns and Institutions*

- 1) Haber, “The Logic of Authoritarian Rule”
- 2) Ziblatt, “Does Landholding Inequality Block Democratization”

WEEK 7: DEMOCRACY

**Tuesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Democratization*

- 1) Herb, “Taxation and Representation”
- 2) Bunce, “Comparative Democratization”

**Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Explaining Democratic Consolidation*

Weingast, “The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law”

WEEK 8: TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

**Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*The diversity of democratic systems*

Colomer, “The Strategy and History of Electoral System Choice”

**Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Electoral system change*

1) Ahmed, “The Origins of Electoral Systems in European Democracies”

2) Cusack, Iversen and Soskice, “Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems”

Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2012

The analytic papers are due and should be turned in during quiz section.

WEEK 9: PROPERTY RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

**Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012**

*Property Rights*

Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy and Development”

**Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup> 2012**

No class

WEEK 10: TAXATION, ECONOMIC REGULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

**Tuesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> 2012**

*Taxation*

O’Brien, “The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660-1815”

**Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012**

Review for Final Exam

**Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012**

EXAM II