

**PLS540 Core seminar in Comparative politics  
Fall 2020**

Professor: Dr. Hélène Thibault

Schedule: One-hour long online meetings will take place every Friday at noon.

Virtual office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 6-7pm or by appointment.

Email: [helene.thibault@nu.edu.kz](mailto:helene.thibault@nu.edu.kz)

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is meant to introduce graduate students to the field of Comparative Politics (CP), a diverse and core sub-field of Political Science. CP is both a methodological approach and a core set of concepts that are used together to create generalizable knowledge about politics in one or more countries. You will be asked to discuss recent developments in the theories and concepts used in comparative politics, and will be called upon to apply these analytical tools to some specific issues. The course examines many of the main themes of comparative politics, notably concepts and issues related to the state and regimes, political economy, and various components of identity. The seminar format and emphasis on individual research and critical analysis will help students improve their knowledge of the field of comparative politics, as well as refine their own research and analytical skills.

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**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- 1- Recognize the main issues that structure the field of comparative politics and distinguish them from those that structure other fields, such as international relations.
- 2- Identify the main theoretical and methodological debates that address the different issues in the field.
- 3- Learn the distinction between analytical and normative approaches in the study of controversial issues such as the choice of political regime, the linkage between politics and economy, political change, political mobilization, the distribution of wealth, the importance of identity, and the role of values.

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**CLASS POLICIES**

**Late submissions**

You must submit your assessments on the day of the set deadline unless you have been formally granted a discretionary postponement. The deadline for receipt of assessment tasks is noon (Nur-sultan local time) on the cut-off date. NU operates a grace period of 12 hours so work submitted before midnight on the cut-off date will be accepted without penalty.

If your submission is received up to 24 hours after the grace period, the assessment will be accepted but the task score will be reduced by up to 10 percentage points. For example, if the deadline is Monday at noon, you have until midnight on Monday to send it without penalty. If you send it before midnight on Tuesday, it will still be accepted, but 10% will be taken away from your grade. Submissions received beyond this point will not be marked and you will not be considered to have completed the assessment task. You will not be offered another opportunity.

In case of serious sickness, medical notes will be accepted but the professor has the discretion to decide to give an extension or not.

### **Beware of Academic Fraud!**

Academic fraud is an act committed by a student to distort the marking of assignments, tests, examinations, and other forms of academic evaluation. Academic fraud is neither accepted nor tolerated by the University. **Academic fraud in this class will result in an automatic failure for this class and anyone found guilty of academic fraud is liable to other severe academic sanctions.**

In recent years, the development of the Internet has made it much easier to identify academic plagiarism. The tools available to your professors allow them to trace the exact origin of a text on the Web, using just a few words.

Here are a few examples of written academic fraud:

- presenting an author's argument or ideas as your own without quoting him or her;
- engaging in any form of plagiarism or cheating;
- presenting falsified research data;
- handing in an assignment that was not authored, in whole or in part, by the student; - submitting the same assignment in more than one course.
- Not providing references for a direct quote or statistics.
- Students who share their work with others are also subject to an academic misconduct penalty. If someone asks for a writing sample for this course, you should direct him/her to the instructor. DO NOT give your draft to other students in and outside of the course.

### **Grades**

Your final grade is final. It is not a basis for negotiations. By trying to negotiate your grade, you make yourself look unprofessional. You are entitled to receive feedback and I will try to be as detailed as possible in my comments.

### **Readings**

Readings are available through the library or on Moodle when specifically indicated.

## **ASSESSMENT METHODS**

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### **Language quality**

You will be judged on your writing abilities for written assignments. I understand that English is not your first language but it is your responsibility to take the appropriate measures to avoid mistakes in your written assignments. You could be penalized to up to 5%, to the professor's discretion.

### **Participation 15%**

The class is a seminar and students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions based on the required weekly readings. Grades will be given based on active participation and demonstration that the students have read the texts and can apply concepts and theories to the topic under discussion. Every week, the students who are scheduled to do a reaction paper will post at least one question on Google Classroom. Other students will react to the questions. Failure to do so will lower your participation grade. You have one week to react to the questions. Failure to react to the weekly questions will significantly lower your participation grade.

### **Reaction papers 5x5%**

Over the course of the semester, students must submit five short reaction papers of +-500 words each. The aim of the assignment is to analyze one of the week's readings. The reaction papers will consist of an analytical commentary on the reading's arguments and content, its logical implications or its relationship with theory or other readings. It is crucial to remember that reaction papers must not be descriptions, summaries or personal appreciations of the readings. Every week, the students who are scheduled to do a reaction paper will post at least one question on Google Classroom. Other students will react to the questions. Failure to do so will lower your participation grade. You have one week to react to the questions. Failure to react to the weekly questions will significantly lower your participation grade.

Please address the following in your reaction papers:

What questions do the reading inspire? What do you think is missing from the analysis? Explain why these missing pieces matter and what impact they would have on the argument. If you think the reading is brilliant and you agree with everything, try to extend the argument and apply it to other areas, potentially discussing some implications of the argument/findings for policymakers. You can also consider where the argument should be placed on the structure-agency continuum.

### **Literature review 20%**

A literature review looks at the major contours of a group of writings as a whole, as opposed to analyzing sources individually. All of your sources should be from scholarly sources, that is, books and academic journals. The goal is not to simply summarize each article in succession. You should pull out major themes, arguments and counter-arguments, and identify potential gaps and weaknesses in the literature as a whole. Please refer to <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/> and <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review> for tips on how to write a literature review. **Due October 9, noon.**

### **Final research design 30%**

The Research Design should focus on setting up a comparative research design, looking at empirical and theoretical research questions in one or more countries. It should consider rival hypotheses, definitions of dependent and independent variables, include a summary of the research design, proposed research methodology, and discussion of evidence supporting and falsifying the argument. This is not a research paper, but rather the background research and plan for conducting your own original research, which should include a detailed consideration of current literature. Because of this, your work will proceed more efficiently if you can link your research design to your literature review. **+3000 words. Due November 27, noon.**

Please address the following in your research design:

- What exactly is the topic, question or problem with which you are concerned?
- What are the key debates or controversies in this area? Which theoretical approach (if any) is dominant?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of current work on this topic, or in this area?
- What are the key questions that still need to be answered or investigated? How will your work contribute to what we know already?
- What range of sources are available (academic literature, official documents, data sets, Internet material) on which you might draw? Are they adequate in terms of their nature, quality, and coverage?
- Do you need to gather new data? What methods might you adopt to do so, and why?
- How would the project be organized and carried out?

- What ethical and political considerations would be raised by the research you propose?
- What are the strengths and limitations of your research design?

### Final presentation 10%

Students will present their research design paper during the last week of class.

### COMPONENTS OF FINAL MARK

Evaluation Format	Weight	Date
Participation	15%	Ongoing
Reaction papers	5x5%	Ongoing
Literature review	20%	9 October
Presentation	10%	27 November
Research design	30%	November 27, noon

### GRADING

<b>A</b>	<b>95-100</b>	Excellent, exceeds the highest standards in the assignment or course.
<b>A-</b>	<b>90-94.9</b>	Excellent, meets the highest standards in the assignment or course.
<b>B+</b>	<b>85-89.9</b>	Very good, meets the highest standards in the assignment or course.
<b>B</b>	<b>80-84.9</b>	Good, meets most of the standards in the assignment or course.
<b>B-</b>	<b>75-79.9</b>	More than adequate, shows some reasonable command of the material.
<b>C+</b>	<b>70-74.9</b>	Acceptable, meets basic standards for the assignment or course.
<b>C</b>	<b>65-69.9</b>	Acceptable, meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course.
<b>C-</b>	<b>60-64.9</b>	Acceptable, while failing short of meeting basic standards for the assignment or course in several ways.
<b>D+</b>	<b>55-59.9</b>	Minimally acceptable.
<b>D</b>	<b>50-54.9</b>	Minimally acceptable, lowest passing.
<b>F</b>	<b>0-49.9</b>	Did not satisfy the basic requirements of the course.

**\*The information contained in the course outline may change throughout the semester.\***

### COURSE OUTLINE

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**WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION - THE COMPARATIVE METHOD, ONTOLOGY AND THE STRUCTURE-AGENCY DEBATE**  
**August 17 – 23**

**Presentation of the syllabus.**

Lijphart, Arend. 1972. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method". *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, pp. 682-93.

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

## **PART I: STATES, REGIMES AND INSTITUTIONS**

### **WEEK 2 THE STATE**

#### **August 24 – 30**

Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime". In Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 169-191. [MOODLE](#).

Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), pp. 1-8 and 53-83.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq3vk>

Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics". *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1, pp. 77-96.

### **WEEK 3 INSTITUTIONS**

#### **AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 6**

North, Douglass C. 1991. "Institutions." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5(1); 97–112.

Levitsky, Steven and Maria Victoria Murillo. 2009. "Variation in Institutional Strength," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, pp. 115-133.

Helmke, Gretchen and Steven Levitsky. 2004. "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda." *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 725-40.

### **WEEK 4 DEMOCRATIC AND REGIME TRANSITIONS**

#### **SEPTEMBER 7 – 13**

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1994. "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 1-22.

O'Donnell, Guillermo and Philippe C. Schmitter. 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 6-47.

Geddes, Barbara. 1999. "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?". *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2, pp. 115-144.

### **WEEK 5 CIVIL SOCIETY, COLLECTIVE ACTION AND RESISTANCE**

#### **SEPTEMBER 14 – 20**

Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 3-16 and 163-85.

McAdam, Doug Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 1996. "To Map Contentious Politics", *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 1(1); 17-34. [MOODLE](#).

Scott, James. 1987. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 2. [MOODLE](#).

Goss, Kristin A. and Michael T. Heaney. 2010. "Organizing Women as Women: Hybridity and Grassroots Collective Action in the 21st Century", *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 27-52.

## **PART II: POLITICAL ECONOMY**

### **WEEK 6 INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES AND THE WELFARE STATE**

#### **SEPTEMBER 21 – 27**

- Larsen, Christian Albrekt. 2007. "How Welfare Regimes Generate and Erode Social Capital: The Impact of Underclass Phenomena". *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 83-101.
- Cox, Robert Henry. 2001. "The Social Construction of an Imperative: Why Welfare Reform Happened in Denmark and the Netherlands but Not in Germany". *World Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 463–98.
- Schmidt, Vivien A. 2009. "Putting the Political Back into Political Economy by Bringing the State Back in yet Again". *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 3, pp. 516-546.

### **WEEK 7 THE STATE AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **SEPTEMBER 28 – OCTOBER 4**

- Routley, Laura. 2014. "Developmental States in Africa? A Review of Ongoing Debates and Buzzwords". *Development Policy Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 159-177.
- Kay, Cristóbal. 2002. "Why East Asia overtook Latin America: agrarian reform, industrialisation and development". *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 6, pp. 1073-1102.
- Flores-Macías, Gustavo A. 2010. "Statist vs. Pro-Market: Explaining Leftist Governments' Economic Policies in Latin America". *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 413-433.

**Literature review due Friday October 9, at noon.**

### **FALL BREAK**

#### **OCTOBER 5 – October 11**

### **WEEK 8 THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF NATURAL RESOURCE WEALTH**

#### **OCTOBER 12 – 18**

- Ross, Michael L. 2001. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?". *World Politics*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 325-361.
- Oskarsson, Sven and Eric Ottosen. 2010. "Does Oil Still Hinder Democracy?". *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 6, pp. 1067-1083.
- Luong, Pauline Jones and Erika Weinthal. 2006. "Rethinking the Resource Curse: Ownership Structure, Institutional Capacity, and Domestic Constraints". *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 9, pp. 241-63.

## **PART III: IDENTITIES**

### **WEEK 9 ETHNICITY, RACE AND NATION**

#### **OCTOBER 19 - 25**

- Marx, Anthony W. 1996. "Race-Making and the Nation-State". *World Politics*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 180-208.
- Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. "What is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 9, pp. 397-424.

Gil-White, Francisco J. 1999. "How Thick is Blood? The Plot Thickens: If Ethnic Actors are Primordialists, What Remains of the Circumstantialist/Primordialist Controversy?". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp. 789-820.

#### **WEEK 10 CULTURE AND CITIZENSHIP**

##### **OCTOBER 26 – NOVEMBER 1**

- Brubaker, Rogers. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-49. [MOODLE](#).
- Yashar, Deborah. 1998. "Contesting Citizenship: Indigenous Politics and Democracy in Latin America," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 1.
- Vogel, Ursula. 1991. "Is Citizenship Gender-Specific?". In: Vogel U., Moran M. (eds) *The Frontiers of Citizenship*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 2002. "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science". *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4, pp. 713-728.

#### **WEEK 11 GENDER**

##### **NOVEMBER 2 – NOVEMBER 8**

- Kandiyoti, Deniz. 2007. The politics of gender and the Soviet paradox: neither colonized, nor modern?, *Central Asian Survey*, 26(4), pp. 601-623.
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A. 2010. "Comparison and Integration: A Path toward a Comparative Politics of Gender", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 177-182.
- Henderson, Frances. B. 2009. "We Thought You Would Be White": Race and Gender in Fieldwork", *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 291-294.
- Vogel, Ursula. "The state and the making of gender: some historical legacies" In (Vicky Randall and Georgina Waylen Eds.) *Gender, Politics, and the State*. pp. 29-44. [MOODLE](#).

#### **WEEK 12 RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES**

##### **NOVEMBER 9 – 15**

- Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar. 1998. "Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa". *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 175-201.
- Dirks, Nicholas. 1992. "Castes of Mind," *Representations*, Vol. 37 (Winter), pp. 56-78.
- Blaydes, Lisa and Drew A. Linzer. 2008. "The Political Economy of Women's Support for Fundamentalist Islam". *World Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 4, pp. 576-609.

#### **WEEK 13 POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

##### **NOVEMBER 16 – 22**

- Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and grievance in civil war", *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4); 563-595.
- Kalyvas, Stathis. 2003. "The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars". *Perspectives on Politics* 1(3); 475-494.
- David A. Lake, Donald Rothchild. 1996. Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 41-75.

#### **WEEK 14 PRESENTATIONS**

**NOVEMBER 23 – 29**

**FINAL PAPER DUE NOVEMBER 27, AT NOON.**