POSC 204: Core Seminar in Comparative Politics
Fall 2007
Dr. Susan Giaimo

Course time and location:
Wed., 4:00-6:30 PM
Wehr Physics 418

Dr. Giaimo's office:
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Office Hours:
Mon., Wed., and Fri. 11-12,
Tues., 1- PM,
and by appointment

This seminar will introduce students to the field of comparative politics. It will cover the major theoretical approaches and methodologies in comparative politics and their strengths and limitations. We will read seminal works as well as survey articles of the field by contemporary scholars. The purpose of the course is to provide you with a solid foundation in this subfield of political science and to stimulate your critical, creative, and systematic thinking.

Requirements

Participants are expected to attend all seminar meetings and actively participate in the discussions. Active participation means thoughtful and regular participation to discussions, and entails that you read the required reading assignments in advance of class.

Written assignments include four (4) short papers (3-4 double-spaced pages maximum) that review the week's required readings. In the paper you should briefly summarize the main themes of the week's readings, but devote the bulk of assignment to presenting your own critical assessment and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach at hand. You must turn in each paper in advance of the relevant seminar meeting. In addition, each participant will write a longer seminar paper (maximum of 12-15 double-spaced pages) that compares, contrasts, and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of two or more theoretical approaches. You should use required and recommended readings for this paper. The paper is due on December 12.

Each student will lead the first half of the seminar discussion for one of the week’s readings. You may select a week that corresponds to one of your short papers, or you may choose a different week. Sign-ups for leading class discussions will take place in class on Sept. 5. For class on Dec. 5, each student will read a selection from Monroe's book, Perestroika! and briefly present your findings.

The breakdown of the course grade is as follows:
4 short papers: 40% (10% each)
Seminar paper: 40%
Class participation, including leading a seminar discussion: 20%

I will not accept late papers unless there is a genuine medical or family emergency, or in the event of an official university-sanctioned event that requires you to miss the class. In the latter case, please inform me as soon as possible of such scheduled absences.

I do not tolerate plagiarism or academic dishonesty by students. I will follow University regulations on academic dishonesty.

Course materials

Most of the readings will be on Raynor Library reserve or on D2L. Several longer readings are from books that seminar participants should purchase.

The following books should be purchased by all seminar participants and are available at either BookMarq or Sweeney's:

B. Guy Peters, *Comparative Politics: Theory and Methods*

The following books are recommended for purchase since we will only read a limited number of chapters from them. So you may either read the chapters on reserve or purchase the books:


Readings from the books you should purchase are denoted in the syllabus by an asterisk (*). The syllabus lists required readings, which all seminar participants must read. It also lists recommended readings that will be useful for exploring a topic further or for writing the longer seminar paper.
Class Schedule and Readings

Aug. 29: Course introduction

Sept. 5: Research Design and Case Studies
*B. Guy Peters, Comparative Politics: Theory and Methods, chaps. 1-4.

Recommended readings:

Sept. 12: Theories, Methods, Problems
Peters, chaps. 5-10.

Recommended readings:
Kohli et. al., "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics, World Politics, 48, pp. 1-49.

Sept. 19: Comparative Politics, Political Science, and the Natural Sciences Model

Recommended reading:
Sept. 26: Marx

Recommended readings:

Oct. 3: Weber's Sociology
Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” ibid., pp. 77-128.

Recommended readings:

Oct. 10: Culture

Recommended readings:
CONT'D

**Oct. 17: Rational Choice**

**Recommended readings:**

**Oct. 24: New Institutionalism**

**Recommended readings:**

**Oct. 31: The State, Corporatism, and Governance**
Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 1979, pp. 3-43.
*Joel S. Migdal “Studying the State,” in Lichbach and Zuckerman (eds.) *Comparative Politics*, pp. 208-236.

**Recommended readings:**

**Nov. 7: Political Development**


**Recommended readings:**

**Nov. 14: Comparative Political Economy**


**Political Economy (continued):**


**Recommended readings:**


**Nov. 21: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Nov. 28: The Welfare State**


**Recommended readings:**


CONT’D

**Dec. 5: Current Controversies in Comparative Politics**
Kristin Renwick Monroe, ed., *Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science*
Each student will also read one selection from part 2 (you may choose, with instructor's consent) and briefly present the findings.

**Recommended readings:**

**Dec. 12: Seminar paper due by 5 PM.**