POLITICAL SCIENCE 508/608

GRADUATE FIELD SEMINAR IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Fall 2019
Dr. Colin Bennett
Email: cjb@uvic.ca

Class Hours, SSM A357: Thursdays: 1pm-4pm
Office Hours, DTB A336: Mondays: 11.30am-3pm or after class

This course is designed to survey the principal methods, approaches and issues in the study of comparative politics. It is required for those PhD students who intend to take the Comparative Politics candidacy examination. The assignments in this course will assist in your preparation for both the written and oral components of the exam. It will also serve as an important disciplinary grounding for MA students intending to write their theses on a comparative topic, or who may be using a comparative methodology in their chosen research. Comparison is a natural and inevitable aspect of all human inquiry. It is also a more explicit methodology. We build theoretical generalizations about politics by continually testing our propositions through comparative investigation. The course will help students understand the sociology of knowledge of the field, its changing dynamics and its various methods and approaches. The readings include various overviews, surveys, and anthologies that attempt to take stock of the field, and critique its development.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

First paper (critical analysis of comparative methodology): 30%
Second paper (Critical analysis of one concept): 40%
Presentation on methods reading: 5%
Presentation on concept paper: 10%
Attendance and participation: 15%
**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Everyone is expected to complete the required readings listed under each topic before each week’s seminar. In each session, I will go around the class and ask for a brief reflection on the readings as a whole. My typical strategy is to ask everyone in the class in each session to note one point or issue which they do not understand, and one point or issue with which they disagree. Overall class attendance and participation is worth 15% of the grade. Under each module, I have tried to include readings that represent different intellectual traditions within this subfield, including critical accounts.

The first paper is a critical review of the comparative method. Each paper is to address the larger question: “Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?” (You will note that this is the title of one of the readings). You may address and interpret the question as you wish, but please note that the question does not lend itself to a categorical “yes” or “no” answer. You are expected to think critically about the arguments for and against the construction of theory from comparative analysis, with reference to the required and recommended readings. These arguments will be thoroughly discussed during the class sessions. This first paper should be between 2500 and 3000 words (not including references) and is due no later than Friday, October 11th. It is worth 30% of your grade. I will consult each of you about your approach to this paper within the first couple of weeks.

Each student should also prepare a brief presentation on of the readings in the first 3 weeks of class (to be determined on September 5).

The second paper is a critical review of one of the concepts discussed after October 3rd:

- political culture
- nationalism/ethnicity
- social movements
- revolutions
- democracy/democratization
- states and institutions
- political economy
- political development

The aim is not to just to review the readings, but rather to take a higher-level approach in which you address a series of questions about the concept: How can it be defined (conceptual)? What kinds of theory does the concept generate? How might it be observed and with what methodologies? In each case, you will try to analyze the concept as a way to understand and
explain similarity and difference in cross-national contexts. Each paper will interrogate and critique the conceptual, theoretical and methodological assumptions behind the concept in question. You are also expected to make use of the longer and supplementary recommended readings posted on Course Spaces, for the preparation of these papers. This critical review will be between 3500 and 4000 words (not including bibliography) and is worth 40% of your final grade. This paper is due on December 2\textsuperscript{nd}.

In addition to doing the required readings, those writing on the assigned topic for the weeks beginning October 3\textsuperscript{rd} are required to give a 20-minute presentation (10%) on this second paper. This presentation will lead the discussion in each of these sessions. I will consult each of you before this presentation.

The Reading Schedule and links to the required readings can be found on the class page on Course Spaces. Please make sure you access this page regularly.
**Grading Scale:**

The following is the official grading system used by instructors in arriving at final assessments of student performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point Evaluation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Deferred status granted. Used only when deferred status has been granted because of illness, an accident or family affliction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Experience Survey (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

*The responsibility of the institution* – Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

*The responsibility of the student* - Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student’s transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found on pages 45-48 of the undergraduate calendar.