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1 Expectations

This is the first of the two sequence comparative politics field seminar. The seminar is primarily targeted at first and second year PhD students in the department of political science. This first part in the sequence focuses on the (often micro) building blocks of comparative political analysis and (largely) macro political outcomes. The course has two objectives. One is to expose you to leading work in the field. For the most part the readings focus on research that is innovative and strong. The second is to train you to think like a comparativist, honing your skills in analytical reading and critique. The second course in the sequence (taught by Tim Frye) takes this material as given and focuses on topics such as party structures, electoral rules, clientelism, and bureaucracy.

1.1 Requirements

**Admission.** To do now: Fill up [this form](http://tinyurl.com/CP2013SS) before Wednesday 4 September midnight; you will not be admitted if you do not complete this form by midnight Tuesday 4 September.

Note that the target size for the class is 16 and there will be a hard cap of 18. Priority is given to PhD students in political science.

1.1.1 Reading and arguing [25%]

The Syllabus lists both required reading and further reading. You will be expected to have completed all the required readings before class to the point where you can be called on to critique or defend any reading at any time. You should contribute actively and be engaged in the discussion at all times. If the discussion does not make sense to you then stop the class and say so — it probably doesn’t make sense to others either. Any computer use should be for note taking only and quick checking of facts directly related to class discussion; emailing, browsing, SMSing etc are strictly not allowed and you will be asked to withdraw if you wander like that.

1.1.2 Writing [75%]

You will write three papers that engage with readings or topics of the course. Each paper will be no more than 3000 words in length and count for 25% of your final grade. Topics will be provided in advance. These topics will be similar in nature to the sort of topics that you will see on comps exams. you should be prepared to move well beyond the readings of the class to address them. Each paper will be followed by a discussion with the instructor in which you will be asked to defend or expand on ideas provided in your written answers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question provided</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Meeting with Instructor</th>
<th>Signup link</th>
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<td>17-Sep</td>
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1.2 Really Reading

The reading loads are not especially heavy but some of the readings are hard. You should aim to read them carefully and reflectively. Before approaching each reading think about what the key questions are for the week and about how the questions from this week relate to what you know from previous weeks. Then skim over the reading to get a sense of the themes 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 is normally enough to get a sense of the big picture. Ask yourself: Are the claims in the text surprising? Do you believe them? Can you think of examples of places that do not seem consistent with the logic of the argument? Is the reading answering the questions you hoped it would answer? If not, is it answering more or less interesting questions than you had thought of? Next ask yourself: What types of evidence or arguments would you need to see in order to be convinced of the results? Now read through the whole text, checking as you go through how the arguments used support the claims of the author. It is rare to find a piece of writing that you agree with entirely. So, as you come across issues that you are not convinced by, write them down and bring them along to class for discussion. Also note when you are pleasantly surprised, when the author produced a convincing argument that you had not thought of. In all cases when it is possible you are encouraged to download this data, replicate results and use it to probe and test the arguments you bring to class.

Note all readings are available on line or on courseworks but you are still encouraged to but all books marked with a ♠. Note also that all numbered readings (above the line) are required; all bulleted readings (below the line) are (strongly) recommended.

1.3 Really Critiquing

Here is a checklist of questions to ask yourself as you prepare to critique a piece.

Summarize the positive

- Try to articulate succinctly what you know now that you didn’t know before you read the piece. Often a quick summary can draw attention to strong features you were not conscious of, or makes you realise that what you were impressed by is not so impressive after all.

Theory

- Is the theory internally consistent?
- Is it consistent with past literature and findings?
- Is it novel or surprising?
- Are elements that are excluded or simplified plausibly unimportant for the outcomes?
- Is the theory general or specific? Are there more general theories on which this theory could draw or contribute?
From Theory to Hypotheses

- Is the theory really needed to generate the hypotheses?
- Does the theory generate more hypotheses than considered?
- Are the hypotheses really implied by the theory? Or are there ambiguities arising from say non-monotonicities or multiple equilibria?
- Does the theory specify mechanisms?
- Does the theory suggest heterogeneous effects?

Hypotheses

- Are the hypotheses complex? (eg in fact 2 or 3 hypotheses bundled together)
- Are the hypotheses falsifiable?
- Are mechanisms implied by the hypotheses?

Evidence I: Design

- External validity: is the population examined representative of the larger population of interest?
- External validity: Are the conditions under which they are examined consistent with the conditions of interest?
- Measure validity: Do the measures capture the objects specified by the theory?
- Consistency: Is the empirical model used consistent with the theory?
- Mechanisms: Are mechanisms tested? How are they identified?
- Replicability: Has the study been done in a way that it can be replicated?
- Interpretation: Do the results admit rival interpretations?

Evidence II: Analysis and Testing

- Identification: are there concerns with reverse causality?
- Identification: are there concerns of omitted variable bias?
- Identification: does the model control for pre treatment variables only? Does it control or does it match?
- Identification: Are poorly identified claims flagged as such?
- Robustness: Are results robust to changes in the model, to subsetting the data, to changing the period of measurement or of analysis, to the addition or exclusion of plausible controls?
• Standard errors: does the calculation of test statistics make use of the design? Do standard errors take account of plausibly clustering structures/differences in levels?

• Presentation: Are the results presented in an intelligible way? Eg using fitted values or graphs? How can this be improved?

• Interpretation: Can no evidence of effect be interpreted as evidence of only weak effects?

Evidence III: Other sources of bias

• Fishing: were hypotheses generated prior to testing? Was any training data separated from test data?

• Measurement error: is error from sampling, case selection, or missing data plausibly correlated with outcomes?

• Spillovers / Contamination: Is it plausible that outcomes in control units were altered because of the treatment received by the treated?

• Compliance: Did the treated really get treatment? Did the controls really not?

• Hawthorne effects: Are subjects modifying behavior simply because they know they are under study?

• Measurement: Is treatment the only systematic difference between treatment and control or are there differences in how items were measured?

• Implications of Bias: Are any sources of bias likely to work for or against the hypothesis tested?

On Policy Implications, if any

• Do the policy implications really follow from the results?

• If implemented would the policy changes have effects other than those specified by the research?

• Have the policy claims been tested directly?

• Is the author overselling or underselling the findings?

Avoid vacuous criticisms

• I don't like it

• It feels wrong

• It's answering the wrong question

• It left out a variable

• The model is too simple. That's not how the world is.

Only make criticisms like these if you can substantively articulate why it matters
Be creative

- Think through what could be done to improve the analysis.

2 Readings

2.1 Approaches

2.1.1 03 Sept: Causal Inference, Theory, Cases


2.1.2 10 Sept: Individuals, preferences, and systems


2.2 Groups

2.2.1 17 Sept: Collective Action and Political Coalitions


2.2.2 24 Sept: Identity


2.3 Institutions

2.3.1 01 Oct: Institutions


2.3.2 08 Oct: The state


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### 2.4 Ways of Allocating Values

#### 2.4.1 15 Oct: Bargaining, Deliberation, & Political Persuasion


2.4.2 22 Oct: Authority


2.4.3 29 Oct: Violence


5 Nov: University Holiday

2.5 Outcomes

2.5.1 12 Nov: Accountable governments


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2.5.2 19 Nov: Democratization and Regime Change


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2.5.3 26 Nov: Reform and Redistribution


2.5.4 03 Dec: Growth


References


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Jeffery J Mondak, Matthew V Hibbing, Damarys Canache, Mitchell A Seligson, and Mary R Anderson. Personality and civic engagement: An integrative framework for the study of


