FOUNDATIONS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Government 20 (Fall 2017)
T, Th 10-11am

Professor Steven Levitsky
Office: CGIS-North Building, 1737 Cambridge Street, Room K204
Phone: 617-495-9997       Email: levitsky@wcfia.harvard.edu
Office Hours:  Tuesday 2:00pm:-5:00pm (and by appointment)

Head TF:  Gabriel Koehler-Derrick (koehlerderrick@g.harvard.edu)
Writing Fellow:  Shanna Weitz (sweitz@fas.harvard.edu)

This course introduces students to major concepts and theories in comparative politics, as well as the
basic tools of comparative analysis.  It examines competing theoretical approaches (Modernization,
Marxist, cultural, institutionalist, and agency-centered) to four major phenomena in world politics:
(1) economic development; (2) democratization; (3) revolution; and (4) ethnic conflict.  It also
explores debates about the role of political institutions, civil society, and the state in shaping political
outcomes.  These theoretical debates are examined through an analysis of cases from across the
globe, including Africa (Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, South Africa), the Americas (Chile, United
States), Asia (China, India, South Korea, Taiwan), Western Europe (Italy, Germany, Great Britain,
Sweden), Eastern Europe (Russia, Yugoslavia), and the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon).

Course Requirements

1) Section participation (15 percent of grade).

2) Two short papers (6-8 pages), based on course materials, on topics to be handed out in class. Due
October 5 and November 21  15 percent of grade each)

3) In-Class Midterm Examination: October 26 (20 percent of grade)

4) Final exam (35 percent of grade)

Late Policy: Barring an extraordinary excuse, all late papers will be marked down a third of a
grade (ex. A to A-) for each day following the due date.  Teaching Fellows are not responsible for
submission errors or corrupted/unreadable electronic files. Any unreadable assignment submitted will be
marked late and dated to when a readable version is received.

Collaboration in Written Work: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For
assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics
and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are
working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for
evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You
must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites,
lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive any help with your writing (e.g., feedback on
drafts), you must also acknowledge this assistance.
Course Material

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase at the COOP:


A course packet containing all other required reading is available at Gnomon Copy (1308 Massachusetts Ave).

All assigned readings are available on reserve at Lamont library.

Schedule and Readings

**Week 1: Introduction** (August 31)


[Note: you might want to begin the Week 2 reading]

**Week 2: The Politics of Economic Development I: Classical Approaches** (September 5, 7)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

- Part I: The Problem (all) (Penguin 2002 version: pp. 1-36)
- Part II: The Idea of the Calling in Ascetic Protestantism
  1. The Religious Foundations of Innerworldly Asceticism (read Calvinism but skip Pietism, Methodism, and Baptists) (Penguin version: pp. 67-87)
  2. Asceticism and the Capitalist Spirit (all) (Penguin version: pp. 105-122)

*Note: This is tough reading. Don’t get bogged down in details. Focus on the main argument.*


Week 3: The Politics of Economic Development II: State- and Market-Led Development (September 12, 14)


Week 4: Democracy and Democratization: Competing Approaches (September 19, 21)


Week 5: Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Developing World (September 26, 28)

September 26: The Third Wave of Democratization

September 28: Explaining Authoritarian Persistence: The Middle East and China


**Middle East**


**China**


**Short Paper #1 Topics handed out September 26 (Due October 5)**

**Week 6: Explaining Social Revolution: Competing Approaches** (October 3, 5)


**Short Paper #1 Due October 5**

**Week 7: Explaining Social Revolution: Cases** (October 10, 12)

**October 11: The Russian Revolution**

**October 13: Third World Revolutions and the Case of Iran**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1995), chapters 1-3 (pp. 15-92) and chapter 6 (pp. 149-172).


**Week 8: Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict: Competing Approaches** (October 17, 19)


**Week 9: The Politics of Ethnic Violence: The Cases of Rwanda and Yugoslavia** (October 24)

Read at least one of the following two cases”

**(1) Rwanda**


(2) Yugoslavia

pp. 93-114 and 141-188 (Required)


Thursday, October 26: Midterm Exam (in Class)

**Week 10: Do Institutions Matter? (I) Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism** (October 31, November 2)


**Week 11: Do Institutions Matter? (II) Electoral Institutions, Party Systems, and Ethnic Conflict** (November 7, 9)

**November 7: Electoral Rules, Political Parties, and Party Systems**

**November 9: Institutions and Ethnic Conflict**


**Recommended**


**Week 12: States, State-Building, and State Weakness** (November 14, 16)


**Short Paper #2 Topics Handed Out November 14 (Due Nov 21)**

**Week 13: Civil Society and Social Capital** (November 21)

Required: Chapters 1 (pp. 3-7 only), 3, 4, and 6 (pp. 63-120; 163-186)
Recommended: Chapter 5 (pp. 121-162)


**Short Paper #2 Due November 21**

**Thursday, November 23: Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 14: Pulling Things Together: Applying our Theories to Two New Cases**  
(November 28, 30)

*November 28: The United States in Comparative Perspective: Explaining “American Exceptionalism” in Welfare State Development*

*November 30: Understanding Post-2003 Iraq: Towards Democracy –or State Collapse?*


Larry Diamond, “What Went Wrong in Iraq?” *Foreign Affairs* 83, No. 5 (Sep-Oct 2004)


Recommended reading for those interested in how the Iraqi crisis contributed to the rise of the Islamic State:

*“Make or Break: Iraq’s Sunni’s and the State.” International Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 144 (August 14, 2013)*