

Political Science Field Survey

SPS Department
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COURSE OVERVIEW

Welcome to Political Science Field Survey. This is the first graduate seminar in Political Science. This course provides an in-depth overview of some of the central debates in contemporary political science, and is designed to enable students' active participation. The choice of readings emphasizes recent work, but some more dated classics are included for their importance in defining the direction taken by the literature. The substantive goal is to familiarize students with theoretical arguments and cutting-edge empirical evidence pertaining to central questions in political science. The methodological goal is to help students conduct cutting edge research. Students will develop their familiarity with the research process by: i) formulating sketches of research ideas around each topic covered in class, and ii) preparing a final research proposal on a topic of their choice and presenting it to their peers.

In the class meetings, we will "unpack" each of the readings, put their claims in context, discuss the shortcomings, and explore directions in which the discipline can and should move. By the end of the course, students will be able to "think like a political scientist." Given that a knowledge of political systems at the undergrad level is assumed by most of the readings, students should consult an undergrad comparative politics textbook (e.g., the Clark, Golder and Golder one) if they have specific holes in their knowledge. Needless to say, such a textbook is not a substitute for the assigned readings.

REQUIRED READINGS

The readings for this class consist largely of book chapters and papers. For each week, students are expected to be able to summarize the main points and describe the methodological approach of any of the assigned pieces. The instructor might also ask a student to defend the argument in a paper, or to discuss its shortcomings: in this case, students do not get to choose whether they argue in favor or against an argument/paper.

GRADES AND EVALUATION

Your grade will be based on the following:

- **(20 percent):** Class participation. This is a Ph.D. level seminar: fast-paced and in-depth at the same time. Students are going to be doing most of the talking: the instructor will mostly ask questions to give the discussion some degree of direction. Because of this format, it is essential that every student has completed the assigned reading before class and is ready to participate in discussion. Your active and thoughtful participation is the key to making this seminar a success. Obviously, you should not miss class unless there are exceptional circumstances that keep you from being there.
- **(10 percent):** Sketch of research idea. For some of our classes, you will be invited to submit, ahead of class, 1-2 paragraphs outlining a sketch of a research idea (research question, possible data if empirical, sketch of study approach) inspired by the readings due for class. We think of this as useful training for one of the most important skills as researchers: producing research ideas, with the goal of filling some gap in existing knowledge.
- **(30 percent):** In-class presentations. Each week we will feature one or two presentations (with slides) lasting no more than 30 minutes each. The presentation will be timed (exactly like a research seminar) and interrupted after 30 minutes, regardless of whether you have finished making your argument. The presentation should try to find the common thread among the readings for a given week, and will be used as a starter for discussion. In the last session of the course, students will present their research proposals to the class.
- **(40 percent):** Final paper. This should be the first draft of a substantive publishable research paper (i.e., a “conferenceable” paper). Writing a paper like this requires asking a meaningful research question, placing it in the context of the literature, and providing an answer of reasonable quality using either deduction (e.g., a formal model) or evidence (e.g., statistical or historical analysis). Paper topics are to be discussed with the instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

November 4: Approaches to the study of political institutions; the State; Institution emergence and change.

Background Reading:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press. Chapter 4.

Required Readings:

- Douglass North. 1991. “Institutions.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5: 97-112.
- Adam Przeworski. 2004. “Institutions Matter?” *Government and Opposition* 39: 527-540.

- Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review* 87 (03): 567–576.
- Sánchez De La Sierra, Raul. 2020. "On the Origins of the State: Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo." *Journal of Political Economy* 128 (1).
- North, Douglass C., and Barry R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: the Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *The Journal of Economic History* 49.4: 803-832.

November 7: Elections; Electoral competition.

Background Readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press. Chapter 16.
- Gelbach. 2022 *Formal Models of Domestic Politics*. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Steven Tadelis. 2013. *Game Theory: An Introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3.

Required Readings:

- Huber, John D, and G Bingham Powell. 1994. "Congruence between citizens and policy-makers in two visions of liberal democracy." *World Politics* 46 (3): 291–326.
- Przeworski, Adam. *Why Bother with Elections*. Cambridge: Polity. Part I (chapters 1-4). [Podcast: Will Trump Concede?]
- Zhaotian Luo, Zanhui Liu, Yucheng Qiu, Shuyi Yu. 202x. "A Relational Theory of Power Alternation." *SSRN working paper*.
- Calvert, Randall. 1985. "Robustness of the Multidimensional Voting Model: Candidate Motivations, Uncertainty, and Convergence." *American Journal of Political Science*. 29 (1):69-95.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder Jr, and Charles Stewart III. 2001. "Candidate positioning in US House elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1):136-159.

November 11: Money in Politics - Lobbying and Campaign Contributions

Background Readings:

- Grossman, G. M., & Helpman, E. (2001). *Special interest politics*. MIT press. Chapter 1 (Introduction).
- Egerod, B.C.K., Mueller, M. & Stuckatz J. (Forthcoming). "The Revolving Door and the Use of Political Skill in the Private Sector." In: Raj Chari, Michele Crepaz, Wiebke Marie Junk, Emilia Korkea-aho. *Oxford Handbook on Lobbying and Its Regulation*.

Required Readings:

- Hall, R. L., & Deardorff, A. V. (2006). Lobbying as legislative subsidy. *American Political Science Review*. 100(1), 69-84.
- Gordon, S. C., & Hafer, C. (2005). Flexing muscle: Corporate political expenditures as signals to the bureaucracy. *American Political Science Review*. 99(2), 245-261.
- Fourinaies, A. (2021). How do campaign spending limits affect elections? Evidence from the United Kingdom 1885–2019. *American Political Science Review*. 115(2), 395-411.
- Egerod, B.C.K., Mueller, M. & Stuckatz J. (2024). *Revolvers in the Corporate Elite*. Stigler Working Paper Series.

November 14: Political Parties; Electoral Systems; Party Systems

Background Readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press. Chapter 13, 14.
- John Aldrich. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2 (through page 43).

Required Readings:

- Invernizzi, Giovanna M. and Federica Izzo. 202X. "A Theory of Party Evolution." Working paper.
- De Vries, Catherine E. and Sara B. Hobolt. 2020. *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Podcast]
- Gary Cox. 1997. *Making Votes Count*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Bangum, Christine T., Jon H. Fiva, Giovanna M. Invernizzi, Carlo Prato, Janne Tukiainen. 2025. "Party Factions and Candidate Selection." *CESifo working paper* 12087.
- Carey, John M. and Simon Hix. 2011. "The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems." *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 383-397.