Course Description: PS 240A-B is a two-course sequence designed to introduce graduate students to comparative politics. We survey a broad range of different literatures. Sometimes topics flow naturally from one week to the next, but not always. Comparative politics is a vast field. In some ways, it touches on every aspect of political science, and it overlaps with economics, sociology, and anthropology, as well as other disciplines. We cannot make this course comprehensive, and even the coverage of the topics we have chosen to address leaves out important and/or influential readings. We hope that these short introductions will whet your appetites for deeper study.

This will be a demanding course. The reading list for each week is relatively heavy, and we expect every student to be prepared to discuss any reading when called upon. You may need to read some items more than once to be able to do that. Your goal should be to come to class prepared to summarize the main point of each item assigned as well as to be able to present a brief and accurate review of the approach, argument, and evidence — all in two to three minutes. If it takes you longer than that, you haven’t mastered the material.

You should access assigned published articles electronically on your own. We will upload scanned copies of book chapters and unpublished papers to the course website and organize them by week. We reserve the right to make some last-minute changes, in which case we will of course provide you information about any new readings at least a week before they are required.

Before approaching each reading, think about what the key questions are for the week and about how the questions for the week relate to what you have learned in previous weeks. Then skim over the reading to get a sense of the themes it covers, and, before reading further, jot down the 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. Are the claims surprising? Do you believe them? Can you think of examples — places in the world, or historical events — that do not seem consistent with the logic of the argument? Next ask yourself what types of evidence or arguments you would need to be convinced of the results. Now read through the whole text, checking 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, or when the author produces a convincing argument that you had not thought of. In all cases, whenever possible you are encouraged to download this data, replicate all or some results, and use that as an exercise to probe and test the arguments you bring to class. Finally, 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 make you realize that what you were impressed by is not so impressive after all. 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 to draw from or contribute to?

Course Prerequisites: The course is designed for Ph.D. students in Political Science. Others can attend only with the instructors’ permission.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, you will:

1. Be familiar with many major questions in the field of comparative politics;
2. Have a good idea of what outstanding research looks like;
3. Be familiar with important recent studies of comparative politics;
4. Have acquired a base of readings that will allow you to conduct independent research.

Course Format: The course is designed as a mixture of lecture and discussion.

Readings: The reading load is relatively heavy. Readings use examples from countries around the world, crossing the distinction between developed and less developed countries. You might want to print out a copy of each reading and bring it to class. You will not have access to an electronic version during class and we may need to refer to specific tables or figures.

Requirements: Evaluation for the course will consist of two parts. First, all students will be expected to participate actively in every class meeting, including but not limited to the “cold-call” oral summaries of the readings described above. In-class performance will count for 25 percent of your grade.

The other 75 percent will be based on your performance on an end-of-quarter, day-long written examination. You will have 8 hours to complete the exam, which is open book. You may take it anywhere you wish as long as you submit your final answers to all three instructors with a time-stamp that is within 10 minutes of when the examination is due. The dates of the exams will be set at the beginning of each quarter after consultation with students in an effort to avoid conflicts.

The exam at the end of Fall Quarter will cover the material in 240A only; the exam at the end of 240B will cover material in both 240A and 240B, but no additional material. The exam at the end of 240B will affect your grade in 240B and may serve as the Comparative Politics prelim if you wish.

In addition to these requirements, we also expect PS240 students to attend the Comparative Politics Workshop (speaker series), which will host speakers over the course of the academic year on some Mondays (12:30–2:00pm). We also expect PS240 students to attend all Comparative Politics job talks. We may discuss these presentations in the class that follows the workshop/talk. As always, your active engagement in these discussions will factor into your class participation grade.
**Course Policies:** The following policies will be enforced:

- Please come to class meetings each week already having read assigned material.
- Please bring written notes to class summarizing each assigned reading and be prepared to discuss every assigned reading.
- You may not use a computer in class, either to refer to readings or take notes. You should take handwritten notes during class in order to retain the material covered.
- Please plan to attend all class meetings except in cases of illness. Do not attend class if you have a cold or the flu.

As a student and a member of the University community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, all work you do will be held to the highest ethical and professional standards.

Please carefully review the university guidelines regarding academic dishonesty. They are available at [http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/StudentGuide.pdf](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/StudentGuide.pdf). Please also review the BITSS Manual of Best Practices in Transparent Social Science Research (August 11, 2015), available at [https://github.com/garretchristensen/BestPracticesManual](https://github.com/garretchristensen/BestPracticesManual). Although many aspects of social scientific research will not be directly relevant to your work in this course, we urge you to begin to familiarize yourselves with the research norms used in our discipline.
**Week 1, October 2: Methods and inference in comparative politics (DP, DT, MR)**


**Week 2, October 9: Fundamental sources of economic growth (DP, DT)**


**Week 3, October 16: Civil wars (DP, MR)**


**Week 4, October 23: The state and nation building (MR, DT)**


**Week 5, October 30: Democracy and its origins (MR, DT)**


Week 6, November 6: Political violence & protests (MR, DP)

Week 7, November 13: Authoritarian regimes (DP, DT)

Week 8, November 20: Inequality (DT, MR)
**Week 9, November 27: Ethnic Politics (DP, DT)**


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**Week 10, December 4: Ansell and Samuels book (MR, DP)**

Ansell, Ben W., and David J. Samuels. 2014. *Inequality and Democratization*. Cambridge University Press.

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**Week 11, January 8: Accountability and Responsiveness (DP, MR, DT)**


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**Week 12, January 15: MLK Day; No Class**

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**Week 13, January 22: RCTs and Governance (DP, MR)**


Week 14, January 29: Corruption (DT, MR)


Week 15, February 5: Distributive Politics (DP, DT)


Week 16, February 12: Natural Resources and the Environment (MR, DP)


Week 17, February 19: President’s Day; No Class

Week 18, February 26: Electoral Systems and Voting (MR, DT)


Week 19, March 5: Political Parties (DT, DP)


**Week 20, March 12: TBD (DP, MR, DT)**

[readings to be determined]