POLISCI 688: Comparative Political Behavior
Prof. Noah Nathan
Winter 2017 // Wednesdays 4–6pm
3315 Mason Hall

Contact Info
Email: nlnathan@umich.edu
Office Hours: 6733 Haven Hall, Thursdays 4pm–6pm, or by appointment

Course Description
This course surveys contemporary research on political behavior from the comparative politics and political economy literatures. We focus on research that addresses three main outcome variables: (1) vote choice, (2) turnout, and (3) protest and other forms of contentious participation. Readings are drawn from all world regions, but special emphasis will be placed on political behavior in developing countries. Course discussions and assignments will focus on helping graduate students both understand the core theoretical arguments underpinning existing research on political behavior and develop actionable research designs in pursuit of their own research agendas.

Assignments and Grading

- **Class participation** (30% of grade) – each student is expected to attend each class and contribute actively to our discussion. Email me ahead of time if you need an excused absence.

- **Journal article “reviews”** (2, 10% of grade each) – each student will sign-up to write two mock journal referee reports, choosing one paper each from two separate weeks of the course. These should be 1-2 pages single spaced. All readings that are (a) not book chapters; (b) published 1990 or later are eligible. Detailed instructions on how to write these referee reports will be circulated in our first class meeting. Each review must be posted on the canvas website by 12 midnight before the class session. The next day, the student will (briefly) present his/her main comments from the referee report to the class. Late reviews will not be accepted – you need to sign up for a new week.

- **Research “brainstorm” memos** (2, 10% of grade each) – each student will sign-up to write two brief (2-3 pages) research “brainstorm” memos responding to course readings for the selected week. Memos can be informal (bullet points are ok). The memos will identify a new research question that arises from the issues covered in that week’s readings and brainstorm a research strategy that could be used to address that question. Each memo must be posted on the canvas website by 12 midnight before the class session. The next day, the student will (briefly) present his/her research ideas to the class at the end of our discussion. Late memos will not be accepted – you need to sign up for a new week.

- **Research design and/or seminar paper** (30% of grade) – students will pick one of two options for the final assignment. Students must notify me by email about which option they have chosen by March 27 and then must sign up for office hours to discuss their plans for the final project during the weeks of April 3 and April 10. The paper or design is due Thursday, April 27. A standard late policy applies (1/3 of a grade reduction for each day late) unless a new due date is agreed upon in advance with me. Everyone will give a brief presentation about their project in our last class meeting. Details TBD closer to the date. The two options are:
– (Option 1) A 20 page research proposal that: (a) identifies an important research question in the study of political behavior; (b) surveys the appropriate literature and identifies the potential contributions of the study; (c) presents a compelling theoretical argument; and (d) proposes a rigorous design for testing that argument that ideally involves the collection of original data. The goal of this assignment is to develop ideas that you could propose as part of a dissertation prospectus in the future.

– (Option 2) A research paper of standard length and format examining a research question in the study of political behavior. This paper can improve upon research the student has already begun outside of this class as long as significant new work is done for this course. I am open to co-authored papers with other students in the course, but approval for co-authored papers must be discussed with me in advance. The goal of this assignment is to start developing a paper that you could eventually submit to a journal and/or turn into a dissertation chapter. While taking an incomplete is not ideal or recommended, I am open to discussing it with you on a case-by-case basis for Option 2 only depending on the nature of your paper.

Readings
All required readings will be posted on the Canvas webpage for the course.
1. **Introduction** (January 4)

1. Miller et al., 2013, “How to Be a Peer Reviewer: A Guide for Recent and Soon-to-be PhDs,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*

2. The Political Methodologist’s “Special Issue on Peer Review”, Fall 2015 (skim; optional)

**Outcome 1: Voting Behavior**

2. **Performance and accountability** (January 11)

*Assigned readings:*


*Further reading:*


- Ferejohn, 1986, “Incumbent performance and electoral control,” *Public Choice* (skim the model)


• Samuels, 2004, “Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy in Comparative Perspective,” *American Political Science Review*

3. Partisanship and accountability (January 18)

Assigned readings:


5. Lupu, 2014, “Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America,” *World Politics*

6. Carlson, 2016, “Finding Partisanship Where We Least Expect It,” *Political Behavior*

Further reading:


- Conroy-Krutz, Moehler, and Aguilar, 2016, “Partisan Cues and Vote Choice in New Multi-Party Systems,” *Comparative Political Studies*


- Schickler and Green, 1997, “The Stability of Party Identification in Western Democracies: Results from Eight Panel Studies,” *Comparative Political Studies*

4. Information constraints on accountability (January 25)

Assigned readings:


7. Metaketa Initiative. Skim the (brief) summary descriptions of these studies: http://egap.org/metaketa/metaketa-information-and-accountability

Further reading:

- Banerjee, Green, McManus, and Pande, 2014, “Are Poor Voters Indifferent to Whether Elected Leaders are Criminal or Corrupt? A Vignette Experiment in Rural India,” Political Communication


5. Clientelism and accountability (February 1)

Assigned readings:


Further reading:

- Dixit and Londregan, 1996, “The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics,” *Journal of Politics*
• Kitschelt, 2000, “Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Politics,” *Comparative Political Studies*


• Lindbeck and Weibull, 1987, “Balanced-Budget Redistribution as the Outcome of Political Competition,” *Public Choice*

• Min, 2015, *Power and the Vote*, Cambridge University Press

• Nathan, 2016, “Local Ethnic Geography, Expectations of Favoritism, and Voting in Urban Ghana,” *Comparative Political Studies*


6. Elite capture and influence (February 8)

Assigned readings:


Further reading:


7. Ethnicity and accountability (February 15)

Assigned readings:


6. Huber and Suryanarayan, 2016, “Ethnic Inequality and the Ethnification of Political Parties: Evidence from India,” *World Politics*

Further reading:


• Kasfir, 1979, “Explaining Ethnic Political Participation,” *World Politics*


Outcome 2: Turnout

8. Turnout in advanced democracies (February 22)

Assigned readings:


5. Eggers, 2015, “Proportionality and Turnout: Evidence from French Municipalities,” *Comparative Political Studies*


Further reading:

- Cox, 2015, “Electoral Rules, Mobilization, and Turnout”, *Annual Review of Political Science*
• Karp and Banducci, 2008, “Political Efficacy and Participation in Twenty-Seven Democracies: How Electoral Systems Shape Political Behaviour”, *British Journal of Political Science*


9. Turnout in developing countries (March 8)

Assigned readings:


Further reading:


- Birch, 2010, “Perceptions of Electoral Fairness and Voter Turnout”, Comparative Political Studies


- de Miguel, Jamal, and Tessler, 2015, “Elections in the Arab World: Why Do Citizens Turnout?”, Comparative Political Studies


14


• Szwarcberg, 2012, “Uncertainty, political clientelism, and voter turnout in Latin America,” *Comparative Politics*
Outcome 3: Non-Electoral Participation

10. Theories of protest and contentious politics (March 15)

Assigned readings:


Further reading:

- Benson and Rochon, 2004, “Interpersonal Trust and the Magnitude of Protest,” *Comparative Political Studies*
- Lipsky, 1968, “Protest as a Political Resource,” *American Political Science Review*

• O’Brien, 1996, “Rightful Resistance,” *World Politics*


11. Protest, riots, and rebellion (March 22)

Note: We will vote on the final week’s topic in class today.

Assigned readings:


Further reading:

- Beissinger, Jamal, and Mazur, 2015, “Explaining Divergent Revolutionary Coalitions: Regime Strategies and the Structuring of Participation in the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions,” *Comparative Politics*

- Bhavnani and Lacina, 2015, “The Effects of Weather-Induced Migration on Sons of the Soil Riots in India,” *World Politics*


- Campante and Chor, 2014, “‘The people want the fall of the regime’: Schooling, protest, and the economy,” *Journal of Comparative Economics*


- Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2005, “Who Demonstrates? Antistate Rebels, Conventional Participants, or Everyone?” *Comparative Politics*
• Pearlman, 2013, “Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings,” *Perspectives on Politics*


• Shi, 2015, *The Cultural Logic of Politics in Mainland China and Taiwan*, Cambridge University Press


Final Weeks: Special topics

12. Methodological challenges and innovations (March 29)

Note: Email me this week with your choice for the final assignment.

Assigned readings: (our discussion will focus on methods, not the specific substantive topics)


Further reading:
Bias in survey and interview data:

- Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012, “Vote Buying and Social Desirability Bias: Experimental Evidence from Nicaragua,” American Journal of Political Science
- King, Murray, Salomon, and Tandon, 2004, “Enhancing the validity and cross-cultural comparability of measurement in survey research,” American Political Science Review
Perez, 2011, “The Origins and Implications of Language Effects in Multilingual Surveys,” *Political Analysis*


Survey experiments:

- Blair, 2015, “Survey Methods for Sensitive Topics,” *Comparative Politics Newsletter*
- Imai, Park, and Greene, 2015, “Using the Predicted Responses from List Experiments as Explanatory Variables in Regression Models,” *Political Analysis*
- Kiewiet de Jonge and Nickerson, 2014, “Artificial Inflation or Deflation? Assessing the Item Count Technique in Comparative Surveys,” *Political Behavior*
- Kramon and Weghorst, 2012, “Measuring Sensitive Attitudes in Developing Countries: Lessons from Implementing the List Experiment,” *Newsletter of the APSA Experimental Section*

Online and lab-in-the-field experiments:

- Berisnky, Huber, and Lenz, “Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk,” *Political Analysis*
- Huff and Tingley, 2015, “Who are these people? Evaluating the demographic characteristics and political preferences of MTurk survey respondents,” *Research and Politics*

Text as data:

- Grimmer and Stewart, 2013, “Text as Data: The Promise and Pitfalls of Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts,” *Political Analysis*
• Laver, Benoit, and Garry, 2003, “Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data,” *American Political Science Review*

• Lucas et al., 2015, “Computer-Assisted Text Analysis for Comparative Politics,” *Political Analysis*

13. “Choose your own adventure” (April 5)

*Note: Sign up for office hours this week to discuss your final assignment.*

We will have one final set of readings. We will vote in class on March 22. Choose among these topics:

- Local geographic context and behavior
- Political culture and behavior
- Gender and behavior

14. **Student Presentations** (April 13)

*Note: Sign up for office hours this week to discuss your final assignment.*

Format TBA

**Final projects due April 27**