Comparative Authoritarianism

PL SC 597B/ Spring 2010

236 Pond Lab Monday 9:05AM-12:05PM

Professor Wright
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is intended for graduate students in political science and will be most beneficial for students who have completed the introductory sequence of graduate statistical methods courses. The course begins with a brief introduction to classical theories of authoritarian rule, and then surveys the current literature on comparative authoritarianism. The course covers: measures and typologies of authoritarian regimes; formal theories of authoritarian rule; political institutions (legislatures, parties, and elections) in authoritarian regimes; the consequences of authoritarian rule for growth and investment; the effect of economic crisis and the determinants of political budget cycles in authoritarian countries; and authoritarian regimes in international relations research (conflict). Students will use cross-national data on authoritarian regimes to familiarize themselves with and replicate the findings of current research in authoritarian politics and/or produce original research.

REQUIREMENTS: Students are expected to: (1) attend all seminars; (2) read assigned material and be prepared to discuss the material before each seminar meeting; (3) submit questions to the class before each seminar meeting; (4) lead seminar discussion; (5) complete 2 written assignments; and (6) complete two in-class research presentations.

GRADING: Seminar Participation (20%); Discussion leader (20%); Written assignments (40%); Presentation (20%)

GRADE SCALE: A: 95-100; A-: 90-94.9; B+: 87.9-89.9; B: 83.3-87.8; B-: 80-83.32; FAIL: 0-79.9

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to attend each seminar, read the assigned material before each class, and be prepared to discuss assigned material. Before 6PM every Sunday preceding the seminar, each student is expected to post three discussion questions on ANGEL.

Each week we are not doing presentations of written work, one student will present the main readings (DISCUSSANT). In the week prior to the seminar during which the student presents, the discusant should meet with the instructor to go over any readings that entail extra-work (e.g. formal models in Weeks 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15). We will discuss strategies to present these readings.

Each class period will be divided into two 80 minutes periods. During the first period, we will do three things: (1) each student will provide a brief (3 minutes or less) oral response to the readings, highlighting one issue for discussion.; (2) the instructor will provide a brief 10-15 minute introduction to the topic under discussion; (3) the discusant will give her/his presentation in front of the class (30 minutes, power points/illustrative graphs strongly encouraged). Following a 10-15 minute break, the second period of the class will be open discussion of the readings.

DISCUSSANT: The discusant’s presentation should not be a summary of the readings. Everyone has read the material; simply summarizing the material is typically boring and wastes our time. Instead, the presentation should accomplish the following.

• What do we need to know and why? (cocktail napkin) Each reading has a take-away point. The discusant should outline one (at most two) take-away point for each reading. (all readings)
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• Discuss the theoretical assumptions. Are they accurate? Are they necessary? How do the results change if we relax the key assumptions? (formal and some empirical papers)
• Discuss the testable implications of the theory. (formal and some empirical papers)
• Assess the quality of main empirical finding. (empirical and descriptive papers)
• What is the next step in this research agenda? Propose something: it doesn’t have to be right, just plausible. If you could have any type of data, how would you extend this research? Is there a case you know of that doesn’t fit the theoretical assumptions? How would you amend the theory to accommodate this data? (think about the readings as a whole)

Here are some questions to help get you started.

• What is the theory? What is the big idea?
• What assumptions does the theoretical model make?
• What is the unit of analysis?
• Are the key actors in the theory individuals, groups, states, or organizations? Does it matter?
• What are the observable implications of the theory?
• Which implications does the researcher test?
• What is the central empirical strategy?
• What is the scope of the theory and empirical tests? How far does this theory and evidence ‘travel’?
• Are the theoretical assumptions accurate? Are there countries/time periods/cases where they might not be true? Why? Provide examples.
• Are the concepts in the theory clearly defined? How could they be more clearly defined?
• Does research design strategy adequately test the theory?
• Are the theoretical concepts validly measured? Could they be improved?
• Are the measures of theoretical concepts more (or less) likely to be valid in some time periods or regions than others?
• Are there empirical implications or predictions that are not tested but could be?
• How does the researcher deal with alternative explanations? Is this convincing?
• Are there other areas where the main idea or theory can be applied? Revised? Implications for future research?

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: There will be two written assignments for this course.

1. Compare typologies and measures of authoritarian regimes/leaders along some dimension of an outcome variable important in your research (e.g. political development, conflict, investment, treaties, health)
2. (a) A research paper that replicates and extends an existing finding in political science research; or (b) a research paper that either (i) provides initial empirical evidence for your theory or (ii) proposes an original coding scheme for a concept relevant to authoritarian politics and to your research.

Students are expected to present the results from each assignment. Using the results from the first assignment to help research or frame the question for the second is strongly encouraged. Class presentations should be modeled after a conference presentation (12 minutes in length). The 1st written assignment is due the Friday of Week 7 (5PM, electronic copy), preceding the class presentations in Week 8. The second written assignment is due the Monday of exam week (5PM, electronic copy), after your second class presentation. This allows time you to incorporate comments from your presentation into the final paper.
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READING MATERIALS: The following books are available at the book store or Amazon. Most required papers are available on Google scholar. Some readings will be posted to ANGEL.


BOILER PLATE: Academic Dishonesty: The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one’s work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe. All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor. In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not. Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity. In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: [http://tinyurl.com/n3q8ym](http://tinyurl.com/n3q8ym)

Disabilities: The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance. Flu: Please do not come to class if you have the flu. Email me and we can discuss how to make up lost time. For the official advice, see: [http://tinyurl.com/mchh6i](http://tinyurl.com/mchh6i) and [http://tinyurl.com/mzyqgw](http://tinyurl.com/mzyqgw)
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READINGS: All readings are REQUIRED, except noted with a *.

Week 1: Introduction & Scheduling

Week 2: The Classics (MLK Holiday No Class)

Week 3: Basic Models of Authoritarian Rule

Week 4: Regimes and Typologies
ANGEL


Week 5: Personalism
Week 6: Military Rule


Week 7: Dominant Party Rule


Week 8: Presentations of 1st Assignment

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Elections


Week 11: Legislatures and Parties


Week 12: Growth and Investment in Authoritarian Regimes


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Week 13: Economic Performance and Authoritarian Survival


Week 14: Political Economic Cycles under Authoritarianism


Week 15: Authoritarian Regimes and Conflict


Debs, Alexandre and H.E. Goemans. 2009. “War! Who is it Good For? The Relationship between Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders and War.” ANGEL

Week 16: Presentation of 2nd Assignment
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Fun Summer Reading: Resource Wealth and Authoritarianism