Comparative Authoritarianism

236 Pond Lab Thursday 9:05 AM to 12:05 PM

Professor Wright
Office: Pond Lab 233
Office Hours: Wednesday 10AM to 11AM or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is intended for advanced graduate students in political science. It will be most beneficial for students who have completed an introductory sequence of graduate statistical methods courses and a course in game theory. The seminar 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 autocratic regimes; formal theories of autocratic rule; political institutions (legislatures, parties, and elections) in authoritarian regimes; the consequences of authoritarian rule for growth and investment; protest in non-democratic settings; and authoritarian regimes in conflict research. Students are expected to produce original research on a topic related to authoritarian politics.

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; and (6) complete an original research project.

GRADING: Seminar participation includes submitting questions on readings each week (20%); Discussion leader (15%); Research presentation (15%); Research paper (50%).

GRADE SCALE: A: 95-100; A-: 90-94.9; B+: 87.9-89.9; B: 83.33-87.8; 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 12 noon each Wednesday preceding the seminar, each student is expected to post three discussion questions on ANGEL.

Each week, the class time will be spent either: (1) discussing the assigned readings; or (2) presenting original research. For each week, we discuss and present assigned readings, two students will present and critique the readings. The instructor will present formal models in readings denoted with a †.

Each class period will be divided into two 80 minutes periods. During the first period, we will do two things: (1) the instructor will present the set-up for the formal model in the assigned reading and the student discussants will present a critique of the assigned readings. Following a 10-15 minute break, the second period of the class will be open discussion of the readings, during which all students are expected to participate by discussing the questions they prepare ahead of time and post on ANGEL.

DISCUSSANT: The discussant’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 discussant should outline one (at most two) take-away point for each reading. (all readings)
- Discuss the theoretical assumptions. Are they accurate? Are they necessary? How do the results change if we relax the key assumptions?
- Discuss the testable implications of the theory.
- Assess the quality of main empirical finding.
- What is the next step in this research agenda? The bulk of the presentation should address this point. 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 evidence? Think about the readings as a whole.

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

1. A 5-6 page research memo that discusses the research question, as well as motivating evidence, assumptions, theory and research design. The 1st written assignment is due on Thursday February 13 at 9:05 AM (paper copy).

2. A 5-6 page literature memo that assesses the theories and empirical tests for the readings on political protest. The 2nd written assignment is due on Thursday February 13 at 9:05 AM (paper copy).

3. An original research paper. For students who have completed an MA, this paper must be a theoretical or empirical chapter of the dissertation. If your dissertation paper is not on a topic related to authoritarianism, the instructor recommends that you drop the course. For second-year students, the research paper must be your MA paper. If your MA paper is not on a topic related to authoritarianism, the instructor recommends that you drop the course. For first year students, the instructor will assign pairs of students a research paper topic.

Students are expected to present the results from their final research project during the last two seminar sessions. Presentations should be modeled after a conference presentation (12 minutes in length). The second written assignment is due on Friday May 9 at 5:00 PM (paper copy).

READING MATERIALS: The following books are available at Amazon. These three books will not be posted on ANGEL. The rest of the required reading materials are available on Google scholar, or will be posted to ANGEL.


ADDITIONAL POLICIES: 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/c3q8ym

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/mch6t and http://tinyurl.com/mzyqgw

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PL SC 555/ Spring 2014

READINGS: All readings are REQUIRED, except noted with a *.
† indicates the required reading contains a formal model that the instructor will present the model set-up in class.

• Week 1: Introduction & Scheduling (January 16)


• Week 2: Models of Authoritarian Rule (January 23)


• Week 3: Distributional Foundations (January 30)


• Week 4: Regimes and Typologies (February 6)


- Week 5: First Research Memo (No Seminar meeting on February 13)
  Written assignment 1 due on February 13 at 9:05 AM (paper copy)

- Week 6: Personalism (February 20)

- Week 7: Military Rule (February 27)

- Week 8: Dominant Party Rule (March 6)

- Week 9: Spring Break (No Seminar Meeting on March 13)

- Week 10: Protest in Dictatorships (No Seminar Meeting on March 20)
  Written assignment 2 due on March 20 at 9:05 AM (paper copy)

Recommended reading:


• Week 11: ISA/Research Week (No Seminar Meeting on March 27)

• Week 12: Elections (April 3)


• Week 13: Institutions (April 10)


• Week 14: Authoritarian Regimes and Conflict (April 17)


- **Week 15 & 16: Presentations (April 24 & May 1)**
Further Reading on Resource Wealth and Authoritarianism


- Karl, Terry. 1997. The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States. Ch. 3-5, 7-10


