

GVPT 780:
Critical and Creative Thinking in Comparative Government and Politics

“If they were to think about it more deeply, they might find out things they do not find without thinking.”

Arthur Stinchcombe (2005: 162)

“These are the people who will help you find your own gifts of sociological imagination.”

Andrew Abbott (2004: 248)

I. Subject Matter

What are we doing here, in this introductory graduate course in comparative politics, during the spring of 2009, at the University of Maryland, meeting in room 1111 Tydings Hall from 9:30-12:15 on Thursdays? In Randall Collins’s (1998: 28) view, we are engaged in the ritual interactions of an intellectual community:

This, then, is the intellectual ritual. Intellectuals gather, focus their attention for a time on one of their members, who delivers a sustained discourse. That discourse itself builds on elements from the past, affirming and continuing or negating. Old sacred objects, previously charged up, are recharged with attention, or degraded from their sacredness and expelled from the life of the community; new candidate sacred objects are offered for sanctification. By reference to texts past and texts future, the intellectual community keeps up the consciousness of its projects, transcending all particular occasions on which they were enacted. Hence the peculiar guiding sacred object – truth, wisdom, sometimes also the activity of seeking or research – as both eternal and embodied in the flow of time.

Introductory graduate courses, one might add, introduce students to the rituals.

Twenty years ago, I acquainted students with these rituals through readings on philosophy of science, social theory, and research methodology. Mostly the course showed how the major research domains in comparative politics were addressed by qualitative and quantitative methods. Such a course was needed because, even back then, comparative politics housed an eclectic mix of theories and arguments, quantitative techniques and qualitative methods, and data sets and country studies. In order to study for comprehensive examinations in a field that lacked the organizing deductive structure of microeconomics or physics, graduate students needed to cut through a tangle of classical and contemporary articles and books. Students could then answer a certain type of exam question: For topic A, what did X and Y say?

“Compare and contrast Moore’s and Skocpol’s views on revolution” was one of my favorite questions. Most of all, beginning graduate students in comparative politics needed a good syllabi that structured the field.

You probably wanted to take that course.

But I am telling you: Such a course is now outdated. To put it simply, summaries, syntheses, and syllabi about comparative politics abound. The hard work of compiling literature reviews and reading lists can be accomplished by search engines on the Web: type in “graduate syllabus comparative politics” or look up a writer or work in Google Scholar. Turn to the 38 articles and 1000 pages of Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes’s carefully compiled *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Take a look at the soon-to-be published *Sage Handbook of Comparative Politics*, nicely put together by Todd Landman and Neil Robinson, that provides 28 chapter contributions. Explore Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder’s *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*, which offers another valuable type of summary: 15 interviews with the major comparativists of the post-1960 period. Finally, examine issues of *The Annual Review of Political Science*, edited by Margaret Levi, one of the major scholars in comparative politics, for up-to-the-minute reviews of the field’s diverse literatures. Similarly, to locate hundreds of articles and books on constructing narratives, comparing cases, debating social theories, doing conceptual analyses, etc., look at my article in Lichbach/Zuckerman or browse through the graduate syllabi that have been collected on various web sites (e.g., <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/programs/cqrm/syllabi.html>).

Rather than using evaluative criteria derived from the philosophies of science, social theory, and research design to review developments in the substantive domains of comparative politics, this course offers a different way into the field. A workshop course, it operates in the midst of things. A methods primer for adults, it aims to teach graduate students how to think and read deeply in comparative politics, and to write, talk, and listen effectively as comparativists. By demystifying the languages, conventions, and strategies in the intellectual domain called comparative politics, it demonstrates how to think and work critically and creatively. How do comparativists think up their problems? How do they go about proposing solutions? And how do they argue about their findings?

Two basic research skills are involved. The first is *critique*. Unlike novels, short stories, plays, and poems social scientific writing is expository. To understand an article or book in comparative politics, you won’t need detective work to decode the symbolism. But you will still have to work hard. Social scientific reading is rereading, discovering the real questions or problems by knowing what will happen and then by appreciating how the whole was put together and why. Understanding the construction of social science writing allows you to be an active reader, reflecting and questioning the material, challenging and criticizing the author. Reading carefully and deeply makes you receptive to learning.

The second skill needed is *creativity*. After a while, it is all-too-easy to be the critical gadfly, approaching literature in comparative politics with condescension and even looking at hard-working comparativists with scorn. Andrew Abbott’s *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences* teaches you how to read social science literature without defeating yourself.

You will learn how to tackle a classic, like Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship*, or an important recent book, like Lisa Wedeen's *Peripheral Visions*, by asking the basic question that motivates practicing comparativists: Can I do better? You will learn how to use "the literature" as a jumping off point to pose your problem, formulate your argument, and design a study to evaluate your claims.

This course thus aims to teach graduate students the business of comparative politics, or how to publish scholarly articles and write academic dissertations. I teach, in other words, budding academicians and scholars how to motivate a literature review, propose an interesting and important argument, develop a compelling research proposal, and finally produce a publishable essay that can be submitted as a journal article and/or used as a chapter in a dissertation. Towards this end, we will practice our skills on important problems and significant issues in comparative politics.

As Arthur Stinchcombe's *Logic of Social Research* shows, an important purpose of comparative inquiry is to make causal claims about complex patterns of networks, relations, and processes. Causal comparativists, qualitative and quantitative, and rationalist, culturalist, and structuralist, make causal comparisons and draw causal inferences about how the world operates. What is causal analysis? What is its role in inquiry? How is it done? What are the most effective strategies for pursuing interesting and problematic correlations? How is causal analysis embedded in other research tasks? In particular, how does it relate to the other aims, including being politically relevant, that comparativists pursue?

By addressing these questions, the course encourages students to *think and work comparatively*. Using material from my edited collected with Alan Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (2nd ed.), students will critically engage a variety of important ideas and arguments from several bodies of literature in the field of comparative politics. The workshop environment allows students to exercise their skills of critical reading and creative imagination.

The pedagogy of the course is necessarily nonlinear. Rather than covering all the philosophy of science, social theory, and research methodology up front and then moving to a series of applied research domains, we will learn one skill or tool at a time, apply it to some substance, and then go on to the next skill or tool. The first half of the course explores four skill sets: appreciating problem situations, recognizing basic debates in social science, using social theories as models and foils, and using basic debates as heuristics. The second half of the course covers three tool boxes: concepts and measurements, causes and cases, and tests and inferences. Most weeks we cover three topics: a theory/method chapter from Abbott or Stinchcombe, literature reviews/surveys/evaluations of a subject matter from Lichbach/Zuckerman, and one or two exemplars of contemporary research in the area. In this way, we cover many of the important research domains of comparative politics while slowly building the basics of thinking and working like a comparativist.

There won't be a lot of reading. However, the focus on quality over quantity means that there will be a lot of rereading. And if students come prepared, there will be lots of learning. Students will come to appreciate the drama and suspense of the craft of comparative politics,

develop an eye for good performances, and recognize useful beginnings, middles, and ends of problem situations.

We have to begin somewhere, and I assume that you come to the course in the midst of your graduate studies. First, I assume that you have taken undergraduate and perhaps even graduate course(s) in substantive areas of comparative politics, for example political economy or revolutionary politics. Second, I assume that you have taken course(s) in scope and methods (philosophy of science and social theory) and hence that you can begin to reflect on the merits of what you read. Third, from the first two assumptions I gather that you have some familiarity with the basic debates in comparative politics. In the last decade, this controversy has revolved around what has come to be called KKV and their critics:

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Henry E. Brady and David Collier. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Finally, I assume that you have taken course(s) in statistics and hence that you can engage some of the technical aspects of what you read. The three primary texts of the course - Abbott, Stinchcombe, and Lichbach/Zuckerman - will make you think seriously about your preliminary studies. To read more even more deeply, turn to the syllabi mentioned above.

II. Formal Requirements

Students who take this course must satisfy these basic requirements.

1. Classroom participation (20%)

Graduate students are expected to complete each week's readings and participate in class discussions. Everyone will be called upon to speak at least once each week and will be asked to reflect on the readings. *This is an important requirement.* Students who repeatedly come to class unprepared do not belong in graduate school. *Bring the readings to class.* I intend to discuss them. In order for our meetings to be fruitful and enjoyable, students *must* be able to ask and answer questions about the literature at hand. The ritual of the seminar involves members challenging each other's ideas and offering reasons for disagreements. Respectful discourse allows everyone to learn something new. Graduate students will turn out to be your toughest critics and therefore your best friends.

2. Classroom presentations (20%)

Students will form "working groups" and make class presentations that consider the week's readings. They will lead class discussions, asking and answering questions, and employing hand-outs that critically and creatively evaluate the literature. I will listen carefully,

sometimes trying to move things along and at other times raising key points that were missed, and will conclude by reminding everyone about the themes of the course.

3. Literature Summaries (20%)

You're a busy person. What's the most important thing you learned this week? Each class student will hand in brief synopses of what they believe to be the most interesting or significant ideas – those worth pondering critically and engaging creatively. These summaries should be brief. Take 2-3 basic concepts or hypotheses in each reading and write 3-5 sentences on each. By 6PM of the day before class, e-mail these brief summaries to me and to everyone else.

4. Final Design (40%)

Students will write a research proposal for a publishable paper. Guidelines appear at the end of the syllabus. Preliminary designs will be discussed with me at private meetings during the eleventh and twelfth weeks of the course. Final designs, which are limited to ten pages, are due the last day of class. Since this assignment is based on what you can accomplish *during* the course, extensions will not be granted.

I assign grades as follows:

- A = excellent potential as a comparativist
- B = good graduate student
- C = you need to find another line of work

III. Informal Requirement

Professor Hanna Birnir organizes our Workshop in Comparative Politics. This workshop, which meets again this semester, is a forum for the discussion of theories and methods, topics and issues, in comparative politics.

Our format is that one week before the meeting, presenters submit a work in progress. Assigned critic or critics begin the discussion by offering specific and detailed comments. A general discussion ensues. Participants in our ritual include guest speakers, resident faculty, and graduate students, but the graduate students are always given the first two or three questions.

Since the workshop is pluralist in methodology and epistemology, we encourage work from a wide range of perspectives and approaches. All students, faculty, and scholars with interest in comparative politics are encouraged to join us. Everyone is welcome, so please forward this information to your friends and colleagues, especially to other graduate students in comparative politics, who may be interested.

You should sign up on our list server. You can access our web site at:

<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/cpworkshop/index.html>

Most announcements are made via the list serve. Papers for this semester will be available shortly on the web site. The spring Comparative Politics Workshop schedule is tentatively the following

Wed, Jan 28 at 11am : publishing workshop given by Dr Jim Gimpel
Wed, Feb 11 at 11am : Student presentation TBA
Wed, March 4 at 9:30am : Dr Irfan Nooruddin of Ohio State University
Wed, April 1 at 9:30am : Student presentation TBA
Wed, April 22 at 11am : Dr David Waldner of UVA

Members of this class are expected to attend the workshop.

IV. Books To Acquire

The following books are required reading:

Andrew Abbott. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Arthur Stinchcombe. 2005. *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lisa Wedeen. 2008. *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

They are available for purchase in the University Book Center.

V. Course Organization

Class meets Thursdays from 9:30 to 12:15 in Tydings 1111. I am in my office, 3140 Tydings, most days from 8am to 4pm. Call me at 301 405 4160 and make an appointment, or drop by and see if I'm available. It is important for graduate students to get to know faculty and for faculty to get to know graduate students. I am eager to meet you, so stop by for a chat.

Schedule of Meetings

Week 1 (January 27) Introduction

We get to know each other.

Week 2 (February 5) Comparative Politics at Maryland

What are some examples of comparative politics? For literature to chew on, we turn to our faculty at UMD – the people who will teach you comparative politics, help you write your first articles, guide your dissertations, write letters of recommendation for you, and – please note – get you jobs.

Please read and be prepared to discuss critically and creatively:

Vladimir Tismaneanu. 2009. “Reflections on the Fate of Marxism in Eastern Europe: Fulfillment or Bastardization?” and “Postcommunism between Hope and Disenchantment.” Forthcoming articles.

Daniel Corstange. 2008. “Illiteracy, Identity, and Redistribution: Superficial versus Sincere Support for Illiterate Voting Rights with Evidence from Lebanon.” Unpublished manuscript.

Margaret Pearson. 2005. “The Business of Governing Business in China: Institutions and Norms of the Emerging Regulatory State.” *World Politics* 57 (January): 296-322.

Birnir, Jóhanna K. 2007. “Divergence in Diversity? The Dissimilar Effects of Cleavages on Electoral Politics in New Democracies.” *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (3): 602-619.

For this first session, you don't have to read any of my work. As you go through the course, however, you might find some of my recent articles and books interesting.

Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations. (2007). Ed. With Ned Lebow. N.Y.: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Is Rational Choice Theory All of Social Science? (2003). Ann Arbor, Mi.: University of Michigan Press.

“Modeling Mechanisms of Contention: McTT's Positivist Constructivism.” Forthcoming. *Qualitative Sociology*.

“How to Organize Your Mechanisms: Research Programs, Stylized Facts, and Historical Narratives.” (2005). In Christian Davenport, Hank Johnston, and Carol Mueller, Eds. *Repression and Mobilization*, pp. 227-43. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

“Social Theory and Comparative Politics.” (1997). In Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, Eds. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. With Alan Zuckerman, pp. 239-76. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

“Charles Tilly’s Problem Situations: From Class and Revolution to Mechanisms and Contentious Politics.” Forthcoming. *Perspectives on Politics*.

Week 3 (February 12)
Skill No. 1:
Appreciating Historical Problem Situations

Now that we have some examples on the table we can address the general question, How do comparativists think and work? We explore what the field looked like once upon a time and what the field looks like now. Read:

Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman. 2009. “Paradigms and Pragmatism: Comparative Politics During the Past Decade.” Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mark Irving Lichbach. 2009. “Thinking and Working in the Midst of Things: Discovery, Explanation, and Evidence in Comparative Politics.” Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alan S. Zuckerman. 2009. “Advancing Explanation in Comparative Politics: Social Mechanisms, Endogenous Processes, and Empirical Rigor.” Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Begin to understand the problem situation you find yourself in.

Week 4 (February 19)
Skill No. 2:
Recognizing Basic Social Scientific Debates

We turn from an historical view of comparative politics to an analytical understanding. What issues do comparativists debate?

From now on, most sessions mix theory/method, literature review, and exemplars. This week's substantive area is political economy, or the study of states and markets. Why are some nations developed? How does development and underdevelopment relate to democratic and autocratic politics? Who wins and who loses in political struggles? How do equity and efficiency in policy outputs relate to politics? Read:

Andrew Abbott. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Chapter 1: Explanation

Chapter 2: Basic Debates and Methodological Practices

Jonathan Rodden. 2009. "Back to the Future: Endogenous Institutions and Comparative Politics." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Isabela Mares. 2009. "The Comparative Political Economy of the Welfare State" by Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Michael L. Ross. 2008. "Oil, Islam, and Women." *American Political Science Review* 102 (February): 107-129.

As you read the substantive material, think about applying Abbott's understandings of the basic debates in the social sciences.

Week 5 (February 26)

Skill No. 3:

Using Social Theories as Models and Foils

Now that we have grand historical contexts and analytical issues on the table, we turn to a useful middle ground. Social theories structure disputes in comparative politics.

Margaret Levi. 2009. "Reconsiderations of Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ira Katznelson. 2009. "Strong Theory, Complex History: Structure and Configuration in Comparative Politics Revisited." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marc Howard Ross. 2009. "Culture in Comparative Political Analysis." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Here are some examples that use rationalist, structuralist, and culturalist thinking as models and foils.

Mark Irving Lichbach. 1995. *The Rebel's Dilemma*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Joel S. Midgal. 2009. "Researching the State" by Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mark Blyth. 2009. "An Approach to Comparative Analysis or a Subfield Within a Subfield? Political Economy." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 6 (March 5)

Skill No. 4:

Using The Basic Social Scientific Debates as Heuristics

Remember that I told you about criticizing others without defeating yourself? Abbott's work on social theory emphasizes discovery, or how to move from critique to creativity.

Andrew Abbott. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Chapter 3: Introduction to Heuristics

Chapter 4: General Heuristics: Search and Argument

Chapter 5: General Heuristics: Description and Narration

Chapter 6: Fractal Heuristics

Chapter 7: Ideas and Puzzles

This week's substantive concern is civil society. We apply Abbott's approach to heuristics to work on culture, ethnicity, nationalism, and identity politics.

Kanchan Chandra. 2009. "Making Causal Claims about the Effect of 'Ethnicity'." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Michael Bernhard and Ekrem Karakoç. 2007. "Civil Society and the Legacies of Dictatorship." *World Politics* 59 (July): 539-67.

Week 7 (March 12)
Critical and Creative Comparativists: Pulling Things Together

Let's think about the first half of the course. We will spend the week working on a new and important book written from a constructivist point of view.

Wedeen, Lisa. 2008. *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Have you learned anything? Have your critical skills improved? Are you becoming a more creative comparativist?

Week 8 (March 16-20)
SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (March 26)
Research Design

The second half of the course explores qualitative and quantitative tools of research design. We begin with a general statement of the twin problems of comparative analysis and causal inference.

Arthur Stinchcombe. 2005. *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 1: Methods for Sociology and Related Disciplines

Chapter 2: Distances as Central to Causal Reasoning and Methods

Chapter 3: Basic Structure of Economy in Social Research

This week's exemplars come from the rich field of democracy and democratization.

Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49 (2): 155-83.

Valerie Bunce. 2003. "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience." *World Politics* 55 (January): 167-92.

Lucan A. Way. 2005. "Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine." *World Politics* 57 (January): 231-61.

Week 10 (April 2)
Tool No. 1:
Concepts and Measurements

We continue with research design for adults, seeing how concepts and measurements are used to study a small number of observations intensively and a large number statistically.

Arthur Stinchcombe. 2005. *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Chapter 4: Using Data to Refine Concepts of Distances between Units of Analysis
Chapter 5: Refining Concepts about Contexts

This week's substantive concerns involve political behavior: How are interests represented through participation in politics? How are democracy and elections important political institutions? Think about the concepts and measurements in:

Robert Huckfeldt. 2009. "Citizenship in Democratic Politics: Density Dependence and the Micro-Macro Divide" by Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Christopher J. Anderson. 2009. "Nested Citizens: Macropolitics and Microbehavior in Comparative Politics" Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan A. Banducci. 2008. "Political Efficacy and Participation in Twenty-Seven Democracies: How Electoral Systems Shape Political Behavior." *British Journal of Political Science* 38: 311-334.

Week 11 (April 9)
No Class

Private meetings to discuss your research designs.

Week 12 (April 16)
No Class

More private meetings to discuss your research designs.

Week 13 (April 23)
Tool No. 2:
Causes and Cases

Continuing with research design, we turn to the interrelated questions of causes and cases.

Arthur Stinchcombe. 2005. *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Chapter 6: Units of Analysis and Mechanisms: Turning Causes into Effects
democratization

This week's applications explore how authority is challenged. We look at exemplars of two different research traditions, civil war and contentious politics, that approach cases and causes somewhat differently.

Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2009. "Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 1-17.

Week 14 (April 30)
Tool No. 3:
Testing and Inference

We conclude our study of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research design with the key tools of testing and inference.

Arthur Stinchcombe. 2005. *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Chapter 7: Testing Theories by Testing Hypotheses with Data
Chapter 8: Improving Theories with Data

We apply our tools to studies of the international, transnational, and global context of comparative politics.

Etel Solingen. 2009. "The Global Context of Comparative Politics." Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, Eds. 2009. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Etel Solingen. 2007. "Pax Asiatica versus Bella Levantina: The Foundations of War and Peace in East Asia and the Middle East." *American Political Science Review* 101 (November): 757-780.

Week 15 (May 7)

Political Science and Political Science

What have we learned? Let's reflect on two classic essays by Max Weber on science and politics.

Weber, Max (1946). "Politics as a Vocation." *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.*"
H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Eds. New York: Oxford.

Weber, Max (1946). "Science as a Vocation." *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.*"
H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Eds. New York: Oxford.

Keeping in mind the four skill sets and three tool boxes we've discussed, reread the articles from week 2 written by UMD faculty. Are you now a more critical and creative comparativist?

The end of the course could have been its beginning. What values in science and politics were you willing defend? As the course proceeded, how did you update your commitments?

Week 16 (May 14)

Research Presentations

Students will present their research designs to the class.

**INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT:
ASSESSING THE STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES OF BASIC RESEARCH
(Paul Huth)**

WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF STRONG THEORETICAL WORK?

1. Clear statement/description of any assumptions or basic concepts
2. Logical consistency in development of argument
3. Parsimonious causal explanation of decisions by political actors
4. Broad scope of generalization across time and space
5. Robustness of theoretical conclusions to small changes in assumptions

**WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF COMPELLING EMPIRICAL TESTS OF
HYPOTHESES?**

1. Close fit between theoretical concepts and variables in a hypothesis and the operational measurement of variables with actual data.
2. Case selection is representative of population of cases and therefore one has confidence in generalizability of empirical findings (high external validity of results).
3. Consideration of alternative explanations.
4. Empirical findings are robust despite some changes in the measurement of variables or the selection of cases analyzed.
5. Demonstration that decisions and actions of individuals or groups were shaped by variables in hypothesis (high internal validity of results).

HOW TO CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY EVALUATE THE LITERATURE

The rule is: Don't summarize, critically and creatively evaluate. In other words, rather than recapitulate what you read, talk about its importance and significance. You should assume that the class knows what is contained in the readings and hence you should restate only those parts of the authors' arguments which motivate your discussion. Do not lose perspective on the goal of critique: To discuss what the study attempted and to show how it could have been improved. Constructive criticism is expected rather than demonstrations of the author's incompetence or stupidity. More specifically, you need to think about four important issues.

Begin with **description**. Discuss the specific research domain that the author investigates. What is the empirical context - the central empirical problem, puzzle, or question - that the author tries to address?

Consider the author's **explanation**. What general research tradition, community, or theory does the author draw upon to address the empirical problem he or she finds interesting? Does the author provide an adequate theoretical context for the work? Does he or she draw upon the best literatures?

Explore the **deduction** of pivotal ideas. Is the theoretical statement of assumptions, things, and mechanisms precise enough to allow the deduction of interesting and testable hypotheses? In other words, does the author support his or her principal assertions and do his or her hypotheses follow from the theory? Make sure to discuss the specific causal statements, empirical hypotheses, or statistical models that the author derives from his or her theory. Are they central to the theory (i.e., their refutation would disconfirm the theory) or peripheral? Do these propositions have policy relevance, or are they politically trivial and unimportant? Think about whether the author sees all the crucial implications of his or her ideas. Are there other important conclusions which the author does not state?

Finally, think about the **evaluation** of the key ideas. Address the research design issue: How does the author examine his or her argument? Are the core hypotheses disconfirmed by empirical tests? There are several sub-issues to consider. The first is the operationalization of key variables. Are the important concepts operationally defined? Are the measurements valid and reliable? The second is the sampling of cases. Are the observations drawn from an appropriate spatial-temporal domain? The third is statistical methods. What specifically was done to examine the evidence? Are the methods and tests used appropriate for the hypotheses being tested? Are the methods correctly applied? Are the inferences drawn warranted? After you consider these three sub-issues, think about what an alternative research design – different measurements, samples, or statistical procedures – would show. Would future work along these lines have greater theoretical or policy relevance?

HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER

If you look closely at articles that appear in scholarly journals in the social sciences you will discover that most of the articles follow a similar style. There are six parts to the typical research paper.

Part No. 1: Introduction

The first part of a research paper typically explores what you are studying and why. Here are some questions that you should try to address.

1. What is your general goal?
 - a. What subject do you wish to explore?
 - b. What problem do you wish to investigate?
 - c. What topic do you wish to study?

2. What is your specific purpose?
 - a. What puzzle is to be resolved?
 - b. What issue is to be confronted?
 - c. What is your particular point of view?
 - i. The theme of this paper is ...
 - ii. The argument to be investigated is ...
 - iii. I aim to ...
 - iv. I would like to demonstrate the point that ...
 - v. My solution to the problem of ... is ...

3. Why are there issues worthy of investigation?
 - a. What motivates your analysis?
 - c. What justifies your interest?
 - d. What makes the subject important?
 - e. What contributions will your study make?

Your introduction, in short, should contain a clear motivation and a well-defined thesis statement.

Part No. 2: Literature Review

The second part of a research paper typically discusses what is known and unknown, settled and debated, about the subject under study. Here are some questions that you should try to address.

1. What is the current state of our knowledge?
 - a. How does your problem relate to existing scholarship?
 - b. What does the research record on your problem look like?

- c. What do existing studies on your topic tell us?
2. What does the journal literature look like? (You must track down journal articles as well as books. Much of the good empirical work in our discipline occurs in the journals and not in books.)
 3. What do we know about your
 - a. Research program?
 - b. Theories?
 - c. Hypotheses?
 - d. Methodologies?
 - c. Evidence?
 4. What are the literature's major limitations?
 - a. Is there progress or stagnation in this field?
 - b. What are the shortcomings in theory and method?
 - c. What are the major roadblocks to progress?
 - d. What are scholars fighting about (i.e., what don't we know)?
 - e. What do scholars agree upon (i.e., what do we think we know)?
 5. What are the literature's major themes?
 - a. What are the Big Questions that scholars are asking?
 - b. What are the key issues scholars are debating?

Your literature review, in short, should be based on a carefully compiled sample of the professional literature. You then need to reflect upon that literature. Summarize thematically and avoid summarizing article by article. If you refer to theories, methods, or data, you must cite specific sources.

Part No. 3: The Theory To Be Tested

The third part of a research paper typically states the theoretical arguments to be explored. Here are some questions that you should try to address.

1. What is the research program under which you are working?
 - a. What are its core assumptions?
 - b. What are its operating rules?
2. For each hypothesis that you derive from that research program:
 - a. What is the bivariate linkage among the variables?
 - i. Can you offer a verbal statement of the causal argument?
 - ii. Can you offer a formal statement, an if-then hypothesis?
 - b. What do you want to explain?
 - i. What is your dependent variable?
 - ii. How do you define it?

- c. What is your explanation?
 - i. What is your independent variable?
 - ii. How do you define it?
- d. Under what conditions is the hypothesis true?
 - i. What are your control variables?
 - ii. What is the context under which the relationship holds?
 - iii. Where and when are the independent and dependent variables related?
- e. Why do you believe that the hypothesis is true?
 - i. What assumptions lead you to propose the hypothesis?
 - ii. Why is the hypothesis plausible?
 - iii. What is the reasoning behind the hypothesized relationship?

Your theory section, in short, should contain clearly stated ideas. You may or may not choose to put your ideas in terms of hypotheses, independent variables, dependent variables, etc. However, you must be precise about what you are trying to explain and how you are trying to explain it.

Part No. 4: The Research Design

The fourth part of a research paper typically proposes a research design to probe the theoretical arguments you have advanced. Here are some questions that you should try to address.

- 1. What methodological guidelines will you follow?
 - a. What is your study design or research plan?
 - i. How will you confront the issues you raised?
 - ii. How will you answer the questions you posed?
 - b. How does your research design address the problem?
 - i. Why have you chosen your approach to the problem?
 - ii. How would you justify your research choices and decisions?
- 2. How will you choose cases to examine?
 - a. Why were your cases selected?
 - b. Why were other cases not selected?
 - c. What type of sample are you drawing?
 - i. Individual level data or aggregate data?
 - ii. Cross-sectional or time series data?
- 3. How will you choose your indicators?
 - a. What is your measurement strategy?
 - b. Will you use nominal, ordinal, or interval variables?
 - c. What sources of evidence will you use?
 - i. Survey research - questionnaires, interviews
 - ii. Fieldwork - participant and non-participant observation
 - iii. Secondary analysis of statistical sources
 - iv. Content analysis of archives and historical records

4. How will you eliminate plausible rival hypotheses?
 - a. What test implications lend support to your hypotheses?
 - b. What test implications lead to the rejection of your hypotheses?
 - c. What challenges to falsification exist?

Your research design, in short, should contain clear procedures. You should state how you will evaluate your ideas.

Part No. 5: Findings

The fifth part of a research paper typically discusses and interprets findings. Here are some questions that you should try to address.

1. What was your purpose in analyzing the data?
 - a. Why present the data?
 - b. Why conduct the analysis?
2. What speculations follow from the data?
 - a. Where do the results lead us?
 - b. What do the results tell us about the hypotheses?
 - b. What indirect implications can be drawn?
 - c. What is the larger importance of your findings?

This part of your paper is the punch line. You must demonstrate that all your careful preparation paid off. Explore your evidence. Think about what you have found.

Part No. 6: Conclusions

The final part of a research paper typically evaluates the research. Here are some questions that you should try to address.

1. What is a succinct summary of your paper?
 - a. Purposes?
 - b. Arguments?
 - c. Methods?
 - d. Findings?
 - e. Implications?
2. What has your research accomplished?
 - a. So what?
 - b. How would you assess your work?
 - c. Did you satisfy your original motives and purposes?
 - d. What was the significance of your investigation?

3. What are the limitations of your analysis?
 - a. How adequate was your work?
 - b. What self-criticisms would you raise?
 - c. How firm were your conclusions?
 - d. What shortcomings exist?
 - e. What problems remain?

4. What does your research imply about future work?
 - a. What new theoretical speculations should be investigated?
 - b. What new policy recommendations should be developed?
 - c. What new research strategies should be explored?

In sum, the final section of your paper allows you to move beyond the data. You can offer a mini-research agenda for your upcoming honors thesis.

The Specific Requirements

Your papers must be done professionally. They must be written as if you were going to submit them to a professional journal in political science, such as the *American Political Science Review*. More specifically, your papers must meet the following requirements:

1. Typed (presumably on a word processor)
2. Stapled (no clips)
3. Double-spaced
4. Cover sheet (no plastic research covers)
5. Title page contains
 - name
 - date
 - title
 - who the paper is submitted to
 - course name and number
6. 8-1/2" x 11" paper
7. 1.5" margins on top and bottom, left and right
8. Pages numbered
9. APSA (American Political Science Association) referencing style

On Writing

You must do more than get the form right. You must write clearly and effectively. Social scientists who write well get their ideas across. Social scientists who write poorly tend to have their ideas ignored.

I can offer two suggestions for improving your writing skills. First, take a few days off and read a couple of books on writing and composition.

1. Some References on How to Write a Research Paper:

University of Chicago Press (1969). *A Manual of Style*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mullins, Carolyn J. (1983). *A Guide to Writing and Publishing in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 3rd. Ed. New York: Wiley.

2. Some References on How to Compose Readable Prose:

Strunk, William Jr. and White, E. B. (1972). *The Elements of Style*. 2nd Ed. New York: Macmillan.

Flesch, Rudolf (1949). *The Art of Readable Writing*. New York: Collier

Barrass, Robert (1978). *Scientists Must Write: A Guide to Better Writing for Scientists, Engineers and Students*. London: Chapman and Hall.

Tichy, H. J. (1966). *Effective Writing For Engineers, Managers, Scientists*. New York: Wiley.

Van Leunen, Mary-Claire (1992). *A Handbook for Scholars*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Second, try using a grammar checker. Many are available as an auxiliary “tool” that supplements your word processor. You should know, however, that some people like grammar checkers and others hate them. My view is that grammar checkers are not perfect but do assist the novice writer by forcing him or her think about sentence structure and paragraph construction. As your writing improves, grammar checkers tend to slow you down and generally become a hindrance.

One final note. If you use a word processor, you should think about using its related tools: a speller, thesaurus, and bibliographic compiler. You should at least run a spell check on your papers. A paper with numerous typos and other spelling errors is unprofessional.