

## Sociology 555 (Winter 2015)—Comparative Historical Sociology

Instructor: Professor Matthew Lange  
Class Time: Mondays, 9:35-11:25  
Class Location: Leacock 819  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30-12:00  
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### Course Overview

Comparative historical sociology is an enormously rich research tradition and includes the works of such renowned sociologists as Theda Skocpol, Max Weber, and Charles Tilly. Scholars following this research tradition generally ask big questions and analyze large structures and long processes. What caused the emergence of effective states in Western Europe? Why did the West industrialize before other regions of the world? What causes social revolutions?

In this course, we focus on the methods behind comparative historical analysis, trying to understand the bases upon which comparative historical scholars make their gigantic claims. The goal of the course is to provide students with an understanding of what comparative historical sociology is, to consider contemporary debates, and—in particular—to provide them with knowledge about the methodological underpinnings of the research tradition.

The core of the seminar is reading and class discussions. Some of the readings are challenging, and an important part of the discussion will involve clarifying points. Your grade in the course has three components. First, participation is worth 37.5 percent of the final grade and will be based on attendance and involvement in class discussions. Second, students will write a 5-8 page paper reviewing the methods used in Prasad's *Land of Too Much*. The paper is due at the beginning of class on February 16th and is worth 20 percent of the course grade. The final graded component of the class is a final project, which can be either a research proposal based on comparative-historical methods or a research paper using comparative-historical methods. The final project is worth 37.5 percent of the final grade and is due on April 20th. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

For both written assignments, students must submit physical copies of the papers *unless given special permission by the professor to submit an electronic copy*. Papers that are submitted late will have their grade reduced by 5% per day.

### Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/> for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>).

### Readings

Every thing but Prasad's *Land of Too Much* is available in electronic form on MyCourses. Prasad's book is available for purchase at Paragraphe Bookstore located at 2220 Avenue McGill College, and an electronic version is also available on the McGill library website.

## Course Calendar

January 5: COURSE INTRODUCTION

January 12: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY: Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, "Comparative Historical Analysis," 3-25; Adams, Clemens, and Orloff, *Remaking Modernity*, 1-69; Lange Chapters 1 and 2

January 19: EXAMPLE: Stamtov, *The Origins of Humanitarianism*; in reading the book, consider both the argument and the methods behind the argument

January 26: COMPARATIVE METHODS: Lange Chapter 5; Ragin, "Constituting Populations"; Ragin, "Qualitative Comparative Analysis Using Fuzzy-Sets"; Lieberson, "Small N's and Big Conclusions"

February 2: WITHIN-CASE METHODS: Lange Chapter 3; Roberts, *The Logic of Historical Explanation*, 16-54, 105-133; Gerring, *Case Study Research*, 172-185

February 9: HISTORY AND TEMPORAL PROCESSES: James Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology"; Paul Pierson, "Big, Slow-Moving, and . . . Invisible"; Lange Chapter 4

February 16: EXAMPLE: Prasad, *Land of Too Much*; **Paper due**

February 23: MIXED-METHODS DESIGNS: Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research"; Ragin, *The Comparative Method* 69-84; Mahoney and Goertz, "A Tale of Two Cultures"; Lange Chapter 6

March 2: No class

March 9: EXAMPLE: Lange, *Lineages of Despotism and Development*

March 16: CASE SELECTION: King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* 3-7, 115-149; Collier, Mahoney, and Seawright, "Claiming Too Much: Warnings about Selection Bias"; Lange, second section of Chapter 7

March 23: HISTORICAL DATA: Goldthorpe, "The Uses of History in Sociology: Reflections on Some Recent Tendencies"; Lange, first section of Chapter 7; Milligan, "The Treatments of an Historical Source."

March 30: EMERGING METHODS: Gould, "Uses of Network Tools in Comparative Historical Research"; Gould, "Patron-Client Ties, State Centralization, and the Whiskey Rebellion"; Katz et al., "Explaining the Great Reversal in Latin America"; Darden, "Lessons from a Natural Experiment"

April 6: No class

April 13: CONCLUSIONS: Lange Chapter 8

RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE ON APRIL 23<sup>rd</sup> BY 4PM