THEORIES OF COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (SIS 672-002)
American University, School of International Service

Fall 2012

Tuesdays, 5:30 – 8:00 in Hurst 2
Course TA: Patrick Litanga (plitanga@yahoo.com)
http://carllevan.com

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SIS room 343
Office hrs: Tues 2-4, Wed 5:30-7 and by appt

Course description:
This course provides a survey of major theoretical approaches to comparative politics and international relations, fields which have traditionally been treated separately. Our class readings and discussions aim to build bridges between them, cultivating an interdisciplinary approach to international studies broadly conceived. We critically examine core topics such as the relationship between democracy and development, the evolving nature of the state, political culture and social mobilization, and ethnicity.

The course is divided into five broad units. The introductory unit gives a brief history of political science, and an overview of social theory, which provides the intellectual foundations for many of the analyses that follow. Second, we explore development and economics through theories that emphasize historical structures, political institutions, and democratic politics. Third, we address the state, human agency, and different factors that shape or constrain international interactions. This includes an overview of realist traditions in international relations theory, and an emphasis on constructivism as an alternative mode of analysis. Fourth, we consider cultural contexts of politics, including social capital, ethnic identity, and civil society, and we explore different explanations for the emergence of social movements. Fifth, we conclude with a comparison domestic and international causes of democratization, revisiting modernization theory with new evidence and also highlighting the unexpected persistence of illiberal “hybrid” regimes. The final exam will concentrate mostly on this last course unit.

These required texts are not in the AU bookstore:
- A subscription to *The New York Times.*
- Required readings posted on Blackboard are noted with an *asterisk below.
If you are new to academic research on international relations, I recommend books such as *International Relations Theories* (2nd edition), edited by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (Oxford University Press, 2010), or *International Relations Theory* (4th edition), by Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi (Longman, 2010). For an introduction to comparative politics, consult *Essentials of Comparative Politics* (3rd edition), by Patrick O’Neil (Norton, 2010).

**Course Requirements:**
The requirements include two short analytical papers, a literature review, and a final exam. Instructions for the analytical papers are posted on Blackboard. The topics are posted as discussion groups on Blackboard in order to facilitate online and offline conversations. I strongly encourage students to form small study groups to meet regularly outside of class. Outside research is permitted but you will primarily be evaluated based on your command of the course material. Each analytical paper should be approximately five pages long, plus bibliography. Come to class prepared to discuss your essay. You are encouraged to bring short handouts or outlines but if you do so, please let me know. For the literature review, assess the state of existing research on a topic related to some of the theories and concepts discussed in part 4 of the course. Post a short description of your topic on the Blackboard blog and identify some of the relevant scholarly sources motivating your research. Other helpful tips and suggestions are posted at [http://carllevan.com/teaching/student-resources/](http://carllevan.com/teaching/student-resources/).

- Part 2: Politics, Power, Development – due on Wednesday, September 26 at 5 pm.
- Part 3: States, Structures, Agency – due on Wednesday, October 17 at 5 pm.
- Part 4: Society, Identity, Culture – literature review due on Friday, November 9 at noon.
- An in-class final exam, focusing primarily on Part 5, on December 11.

Unless otherwise noted assignments should be submitted in hardcopy form; double-sided printing is appreciated. Late papers will be penalized. All papers must follow a standard formatting style such as Chicago, APSA or MLA. Please see my website for additional information: [http://carllevan.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Style-guide-for-papers-Spring-2011.pdf](http://carllevan.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Style-guide-for-papers-Spring-2011.pdf). AU’s Academic Integrity Code will be strictly enforced. For information see: [www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm](http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm). Students taking notes with computers are asked to sit in the front row. *Do not browse, email, text, etc. during class!*

Papers are graded on the following scale: 100 to 93 is an A, 92 to 90 is an A-; 89 to 87 is a B+, 86 to 83 is a B, 82 to 80 is a B-, etc. A passing grade cannot be awarded without completion of all course requirements. If you anticipate missing an assignment deadline due to a medical or other emergency, please notify the instructor before the due date. Your course grade will be based on the following calculation: Each analytical paper 20 percent, the literature review 25 percent, the final exam 25 percent, and participation 10 percent.

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

(1) **Course Overview** (August 28)
Weber, Max. 1918. “Politics as a Vocation” and “Science as a Vocation,” both online at: http://www.sociosite.net/topics/weber.php#ORIGINAL

(2) Social Theory and Social Science (September 4)
Katzenstein, Ira. Chapter 4: “Strong Theory, Complex History,” in L & Z.

Recommended:

PART 2: POLITICS, POWER, AND DEVELOPMENT

(3) Modernization Theory and Dependency Theory (September 11)

Recommended:

(4) Democratic Theory (September 18)

Recommended:

(5) Institutions and Incentives (September 25)
Levi, Margaret. Chapter 5: “Reconsiderations of Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis,” in L & Z.
Recommended:

PART 3: STATES, STRUCTURES, AND AGENCY

(6) The State (October 2)
Migdal, Joel. Chapter 7: “Researching the State,” in L & Z.

Recommended:

(7) Realism and Neo-Realism in International Relations (October 9)

And read one of the following:

Recommended Reading:

(8) “Realist Constructivism” as Theoretical Synthesis (October 16)

PART 4: SOCIETY, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE

(9) Political Culture (October 23)
Ross, Marc Howard. Chapter 6: “Culture in Comparative Political Analysis,” in L & Z.

**Recommended:**
DeTocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*.

(10) **Civil Society and Social Movements** (October 30)

**NOTE:** Class will meet at the Institute for Policy Studies, 1112–16th Street NW, at L Street.  
First discussion on literature review topics.

McAdam, Doug et al. Chapter 10: “Comparative Perspectives on Contentious Politics,” in L&Z.

**Recommended:**

(11) **Ethnicity** (November 6)

Second discussion on literature review topics.


**Recommended:**

**PART 5: DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP**

(12) **Domestic Dimensions of Democratization and Political Change** (November 13)


→ No Tuesday classes on November 20. (Friday classes meet instead.)

(13) **Democratization, Foreign Policy, Global Politics** (November 27)

Levitsky and Way. Chapters 1 and 2, pages 1-83.

Recommended:

(14) **Linkage and Leverage** (December 4)
Levitsky and Way. Read chapters 3 or 4; 5 or 6; and chapter 8.

Recommended:
See the special September 2010 issue of *Comparative Political Studies* on democratization.

**IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM ON DECEMBER 11 FROM 5:30 TO 08:00 PM**

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([www.prepared.american.edu](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.