

University of Toronto
Department of Political Science

Pol. 2811Y
Master's Research Seminar

2017-2018
Mr. Falkenheim

Exploring Political Transitions

Office: SS 3029
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Course Overview

This course is intended primarily for M.A. students to meet the research requirements of the Departmental M.A. program. The primary purpose of the seminar is to provide an opportunity for students to design and conduct an independent research project on a topic of their choice. Topics chosen may fit within the major themes of the course, but equally students are free to define their own topics outside of those parameters.

The course is designed to assist students with their choice of research topic, with framing the research appropriately in terms of conceptualization and research design, and in identifying useful methodologies and appropriate resources and research materials. The seminar format will provide a collegial setting within which students can present their research, hone their presentational skills, gain useful feedback and develop a variety of skills useful in their future academic or professional life.

Format(s)

The format will vary during the year. The Fall semester will involve a number of standard colloquium-style sessions dealing with methodology and conceptualization. The substantive focus will be on issues of political transition. The purpose is not so much to introduce the broad field of *transitology* as to assess the various approaches that have been used in the study of "Third Wave" transitions. In particular, I would like to examine the utility of a variety of popular *problematics*, including 'civil society', 'contentious politics' among others. Depending on student interest other concepts and issues may be added to this list as the year progresses.

A number of sessions will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of research projects as they take shape over the course of the year. In addition, a number of seminars will feature guest presentations by graduate students and faculty members reflecting on their own research choices and strategies at early and formative points in their professional development.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

Research proposal, including brief literature review, proposed methodology and outline:

Initial Draft: Due: January 9. Revised Draft: February 27.

Weight: 10%

Final Research Paper: Due: April 15 (For those graduating in June) Due: September 6 for those convocating in November,

Weight: 80%

Participation, including class discussion, research presentations

10%

Texts:

1. Barbara Geddes. Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics, University of Michigan Press, 2003.
2. Additional weekly readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Schedule of Topics and Readings: Fall Term

September 11

Course Introduction

1. Bloemrad, "What the Textbooks Don't Tell You."

September 18

Thinking About the Discipline

1. Moses and Knutsen, Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research, Preface, Introduction and Chapter 7.

September 25

Disciplinary Alternatives

1. Moses and Knutsen, Ways of Knowing, Chapter 8.
2. Rosenau, Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences, Chapter 1.

October 2

Problematics and Paradigms

1. Lucian W. Pye, "Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism," American Political Science Review, Vol. 84, No. 1 (March, 1990)
2. Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics, pp. 1-40.

- October 9 **No Class: Thanksgiving**
- October 16 **Classification and Regime Taxonomies**
1. Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles, pp. 40-88.
 2. Armony and Schamis, "Babel in Democratization Studies," Journal of Democracy, 2005.
 3. Jason Brownlee, "Portents of Pluralism," Perspectives on Politics, 2007.
- October 23 **Conceptualization and Measurement: Rethinking Legitimacy**
1. Bruce Gilley, The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy, Chapters 1-3.
- October 30 **Civil Society and Political Transitions:
Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**
1. Omar G. Encarnacion, "Civil Society Reconsidered," Comparative Politics, April, 2006.
 2. Ian Johnson, "The Death and Life of China's Civil Society," Perspectives, September, 2003.
 3. Rollin F. Tusalem, "A Boon or a Bane? The Role of Civil Society in Third-and Fourth-Wave Democracies," International Political Science Review, Vol. 28, No.3 (2007.).
- November 6 **Fall Reading Break: No Class**
- November 14 **Library Orientation**
- November 21 **Case Selection and Research Puzzles**
1. Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles, Chapter 3
 2. Moses and Knutsen, Ways of Knowing, Chapter 6.
- November 28 **Data, Meta-data and Narratives**
1. Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles, Chapter 4.
 2. Moses and Knutsen, Ways of Knowing, Chapter 9

December 5

‘Rational Choice’ and ‘Path Dependency’: The Virtues of Theory

1. Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles, Chapters 5.

Spring Term:

Research Progress Meetings and Guest Lectures, Schedule to be announced.