

University of Toronto  
Department of Political Science

Pol. 2810/2811Y  
Master's Research Seminar

2013-2014  
Mr. Falkenheim

## **Exploring Political Transitions**

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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. At the conclusion of the year, formal presentation of research findings and results may be structured in the mode of a standard professional academic conference, with panelists, discussants and general participation. 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: December 1: Final Draft. January 11.

Weight: 20%

*Final Research Paper*: Due April 11

Weight: 60%

*Participation*, including class discussion, research presentations  
20%

## **Texts:**

1. Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics, (University of Michigan Paperback). Available for purchase at the University of Toronto Bookstore.
2. Selected Articles: Available online or on Blackboard

## **Schedule of Topics and Readings:**

September 11/12      **Course Introduction**

September 18/19      **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.

September 25/26      **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.

October 2/3              **Rethinking Legitimacy**

1. Bruce Gilley, The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy, Chapters 1-3.

October 9/10

**Democratic Legitimacy, Governance, and Performance Outcomes**

1. Chu Yun-han et. al., How East Asians View Democracy, Chapter 1.
2. Donald Emerson, "Minding the Gap Between Democracy and Governance," Journal of Democracy, 2012.

October 16/17

**Preliminary Discussion of Research Topics**

October 23/24

**Civil Society and Political Transitions**

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.).

Oct. 30/Nov. 1

**Contentious Politics: Old Wine in New Bottles?**

1. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, "To Map Contentious Politics," Working Paper, Center for studies of Social Change, February 1995.
2. Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sand Castles, Chapter 4

November 6/7

**'Rational Choice' and 'Path Dependency': The Virtues of Theory**

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

November 13/14

**Research Choices: Lessons from the Field (Guest Lecture)**

November 20/21

**MRP Research Review/Library Research Introduction**

November 27/28

**Individual Appointments**

**Spring Term Research Progress Meetings (See Blackboard for Schedule)**