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Table 1: Clusters and Topics
1. Readings and Clusters

Students will be expected to have deep knowledge of the arguments and evidence contained in the core reading list. The reading list will generally include between about 125 readings, each of relevance to one or two topics. In addition to the core reading list students will be expected to be familiar with all Comparative Politics articles published in the APSR in the twelve months prior to the examination in question.

This list exposes you to a diversity of approaches, theoretical perspectives, and thematic areas. It should not however be considered a “canon” — while most of the readings have been influential this does not mean that they are uniformly compelling; nor does omission from the list suggest readings are unimportant. You are encouraged to read well beyond this list as you engage deeply with topics; nevertheless it will be possible to pass your comprehensive exams drawing solely on deep understanding of the readings on this list and your ability to reason about research strategies and cases.

2. Readings, Classes & Exams

The readings have been roughly allocated across two semesters of the Comparative Politics Field Seminar and you can expect that one topic will be covered in each seminar in each week on average, though instructors may split or aggregate topics differently in different years and may select which readings to treat as required readings for class discussion purposes differently in different years.

The reading list is liable to be updated from year to year. Exams will be based on the reading list of the immediately preceding year. So for example exams in May and September 2016 and January 2017 will be based on the 2015-2016 academic year list.

3. How to Read

The Comps reading list is not especially large. But some readings are hard. You should aim to read carefully and reflectively. Here are guides to critiquing and to reading.

4. Exam Structure

The exam contain nine questions divided into 6 sections plus a wildcard section as described below.

1. Majors will be required to answer 3 questions from at least three different sections.
2. Minors will be required to answer 2 questions from at least two different sections.
3. Questions in each section are likely to draw on knowledge of the theoretic and empirical literatures as well as knowledge of cases.
4. Some questions might request commentary and critique on specific readings from the list.

The structure of this exam is designed to ensure more regular and predictable coverage of the major topics covered in the survey courses.
5. Writing Good Exam Answers

A good answer to a Comps exam question:

1. **Answers the question.** It is very common to write questions that are only tangentially related to the question. Students routinely fail to answer questions of the form: “Is the effect of X on Y different in A areas and in B areas”, in some cases describing only the effects of X on Y or the differences in Y between areas, or the differences in X. Very often time is lost discussing what X is and whether it is a useful concept. There are no points for those kinds of answers. Engage in conceptual clarification only to the extent that it is asked in the question and to the extent that it is necessary to make sense of your answer. If essential you can have a short paragraph early on that stipulates and/or justifies what definitions you will use.

2. **Is structured.** Don’t start writing immediately. Sit back and think about the question. Jot down the three or four major points you want to make. Think about how they relate to each other and whether they can be ordered or developed in an integrated way. Note the key research you want to engage with for each point. Anticipate how others would critique your arguments and provide counter critiques. Only then start writing.

3. **Has signposting.** At the beginning say what you are going to say. Make your main points upfront and provide a structure. Put short headers in bold over various sections so that people can see quickly where the action is.

4. **Shows awareness of the big picture but goes deeper.** The hardest thing about Comps essays is that large questions are covered but space is very constrained. Should you give short overviews of a dozen approaches or should you go deeply in to one or two. The first approach risks looking shallow, the second narrow. An effective approach is to lead sections with a rapid overview, gathering contributions together analytically and then going into more depth in a small number, justified by your overview. (Of the form: “One set of authors focuses on domestic factors (a,b,c,d), others focus on the role of international pressures (e,f,g,h); more recently authors have argued that these factors interact and you cannot understand the effects of one without understanding the other (i,j,k). Since the arguments of this third group are more general than the first two I focus my discussion on two studies in this third set.”)

5. **Is not about you.** You should have a voice but this is not about you. Graders will want to see you engaging critically with the work, they want to hear your views but they are interested in your arguments not your opinions. Avoid hyperbole. Whether you find something exciting, fantastic, or boring is not relevant; whether something is seminal or groundbreaking is relevant, but you need to say why it is seminal or groundbreaking. Avoid unnecessary adjectives and avoid all adjectives that you cannot substantively defend.

6. **Says something new.** Comps essays don’t have to say something new, but it is nice when they do. Closing off with some speculations or hypotheses based on the preceding discussion, or a proposal for an approach to better address some problem, can be a satisfying way to end a comps essay. You have more rope to take a risk here if the preceding discussion on the existing literature is solid.
6. Sample Exam (Largely Drawn From Jan 2014 Exam)

Majors: Please answer three questions from at least three different sections. Minors: Please answer two questions from two different sections.

In each essay, you should:

• Answer the question that is asked. Refine if necessary but do not expand.
• Discuss at least two theoretical accounts and at least two bodies of evidence as they relate to the theories (a body of evidence is a study or related set of studies that address a problem empirically).
• Include critical assessments of the theoretical and empirical literatures that you discuss.

Section I: Approaches

1. Some argue that while case studies may be useful for generating theoretical insights, quantitative analysis is needed to test theories. Provide arguments in favor or against the proposition with illustrations from research in comparative politics.

Section II: Primitives

2. Are models of collective action useful for understanding participation in contentious politics (choose a class of political events e.g. violence, protests, strikes or other)? Discuss in the light of at least two theories and empirical evidence.

3. Describe and critique at least two theories or empirical accounts for why social conflict is sometimes organized along identity (e.g. race, class, gender) lines.

Section III: Political Structures

4. Why do electoral rules vary across countries? What arguments have authors put forward to account for this variation and which do you find most convincing? Please discuss with reference to at least two countries.

5. In different parts of the world we have seen dramatic shifts in voting patterns and party systems. Why? In your answer, draw on appropriate theory and compare two cases.

Section IV: Outcomes I

6. Do the same factors that explain participation in violence by individuals also explain onset of violence in polities?

Section V: Outcomes II

7. Why do authoritarian regimes survive in some places but not others? Discuss with reference to at least two theories and two cases or empirical analyses.

Section VI: Outcomes III

8. Under what conditions are elections most likely to result in the representation of citizens preferences? In your answer describe the logic and evidence for at least two factors that matter.

Section VII: Wildcard

9. Why did Syriza call a referendum in the middle of the bailout negotiations? Remember to use theory and evidence from the study of Comparative Politics.

END
7. 2016-17 Comps Reading List

1. Approaches

1.1. Causal Inference and Identification


1.2. Qualitative Methods, Case Studies, & Process-Tracing [Fall:16]


2. Primitives

2.1. Collective Action & Applications [Fall:16]

1. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. Toward an integrated perspective on social movements and revolutions. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, culture, and structure*, 1997


2.2. Bargaining & Applications


2.3. Groups & Coalitions [Fall:16]


2.4. **Identity Politics [Fall:16]**


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2.5. Political Culture [Fall:16]


2.6. Institutions [Spring:17]


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3. Political Structures

3.1. The State, Institutions, & State Strength [Spring:17 – two weeks]


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3.2. Parties & Democratic Systems [Spring:17]


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3.3. Voting, Elections, & Electoral Systems [Spring:17 – two weeks]


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### 3.4. Non-Democratic Systems [Spring:17]


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4. Outcomes I

4.1. Political Violence *[Spring:17]*


4.2. Non-Electoral Participation [Fall:16]

1. Elisabeth Jean Wood. Insurgent collective action and civil war in El Salvador. Cambridge University Press, 2003 Chapters 1, 7, & 8

2. Steven I Wilkinson. Votes and violence: Electoral competition and ethnic riots in India. Cambridge University Press, 2006 Chapters 1, 2, & 7


- Samuel P Huntington. Political order in changing societies. Yale University Press, 2006

4.3. Revolutions and Regime Change [Fall:16]


2. Theda Skocpol. States and social revolutions, volume 29. Cambridge University Press, 1979, Chapters 1 & 4


4.4. Democratization [Fall:16]


• Alfred C Stepan and Juan José Linz. Toward consolidated democracies. *Journal of democracy*, 7(2):14–33, 1996. URL [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v007/7.2linz.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v007/7.2linz.html)


5. Outcomes II

5.1. Electoral Participation [Spring:17]


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### 5.2. Accountability & Citizen/Politician Linkages [Fall:16]


2. Herbert Kitschelt. Linkages between citizens and politicians in democratic polities. *Comparative political studies*, 33(6-7):845–879, 2000. URL [http://cps.sagepub.com/content/33/6-7/845.short](http://cps.sagepub.com/content/33/6-7/845.short)


• David Lake and Matthew Baum. The invisible hand of democracy: Political control and the provision of public services. *Comparative Political Studies*, 34:587–621, 2001. URL [http://cps.sagepub.com/content/34/6/587.abstract](http://cps.sagepub.com/content/34/6/587.abstract)

5.3. Corruption [Spring:17]


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6. Outcomes III

6.1. Inequality & Polarization [Spring:17]


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6.2. Growth [Spring:17]


6.3. Redistribution & The Welfare State [Fall:16]


6.4. Policy Choice & Policy Reform [Fall:16]


**Table 2: Fall 2016 Schedule**

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