The general examination in comparative politics is based on a shared reading list. The purpose of the list is to help identify the most important topic areas and theoretical debates in comparative politics and provide a very basic “toolbox,” a repertoire of important intellectual strategies. The list reflects the plurality of perspectives in the field. It is not meant to be exhaustive. There are many good books and articles not on the list, of course, and we expect students to take courses and read more broadly in the themes on which they focus. It is thoroughly appropriate to mention these additional sources in answer to a general question, in addition to showing familiarity with the ideas represented here.

To prepare for the exam, those for whom comparative politics is a major field should acquaint themselves with “Paradigms & Research Methods” as well as four of the other six major sections. (That is, each student may omit two of the major sections and still be adequately prepared.) It is worth remembering that in real life/scholarship, as in the exam, most problems require integration of ideas across sections. Many works cited in one section could easily have been listed under multiple sections on this reading list.

To be “conversant” with the material means demonstrating the ability to compare and contrast alternative plausible explanations/theories in answer to some of the important questions in the sub-field. The format of the exam is similar to discussion papers in the gateway seminar, Politics 521. Central to success are 1) capacity to identify and use theories relevant to the question posed, 2) specificity, including ability to recount the “story line” that links causes to effects, and 3) originality. “Originality” may mean many things, including demonstrated ability to integrate disparate material, to use explanations to help understand a new problem (including your own research interests), or to extend and revise explanations in the literature.

Graduate students have the option to take one of their additional examinations in the politics of a region in which they will specialize. The reading lists for these exams are developed by faculty members in the area of interest in conjunction with the student.
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Section I: Paradigms & Research Methods

I.A) Theory, Concepts, Measurement


Jon Elster. Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences. (Some students have indicated that they find Daniel Little, Microfoundations, Method, and Causation more useful.)


I.B) Theory-Building Strategies or Paradigms


Robert Bates. “Macropolitical Economy in the Field of Development,” from James Alt and Kenneth Shepsle, Perspectives on Positive Political Economy


Donald Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice*, chapter 5.


Louis Mink, “The Autonomy of Historical Understanding,” *History and Theory* 5: 30-47 or another selection that explains the difference between historical reasoning and social science reasoning.


I.C) *Research Design and Data Collection*


Clifford Geertz. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in


I.D) Selected Special Issues in Theory and Research Design

a. **Endogeneity and Path Dependence**


b. **Case selection and selection bias**


c. **Analytic Narratives**


d. **Counter-factuals**

James Fearon, “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science,” *World Politics*

e. **Comparative Method**

David Collier, “Comparative Politics and Comparative Method,” in Dankwart Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics*


### I.E) Area Studies and the Discipline


Section II : States & Regimes

II.A) State Formation

A Useful Metaphor?
   Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime, “in Bringing the State Back In


Theories of State Formation

Charles Tilly. The Formation of National States in Western Europe. (read enough to get the basic ideas)


Weak States


The “Resource Curse”

Michael Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” World Politics, April 2001. (Do states that fund government through resource windfalls behave differently from other states? Look for the rentier state argument summarized in this article.)

II.B) Theories of Political Development

*Modernization Theory*


*Critics Part 1: Institutionalization & order…*


*Critics Part 2: Marx and His Successors: Marxism and Dependency Theory as Alternative Theories of Political Development*

Karl Marx. *The Communist Manifesto* or some other version of Marx’s argument.


II.C) Political Regimes and Democratization

Regimes
Aristotle, from *The Politics*. Book 4, iv, x, xii and Book 5 vi.


Alfred Stepan. *Rethinking Military Politics*. (There is an extensive literature on military coups, much of which is not reflected here)


Democratization


Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson. 2006. *Economic origins of dictatorship and democracy*: Cambridge Univ Pr.


*Consolidation and Democratic Breakdown*


**Dictatorships/Authoritarian Regimes**


**Accountability**


Section III: Institutions

III.A) Executives, Assemblies, and Courts

The Federalist Papers.

Executives and assemblies
Juan J. Linz, “Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference?” from The Failure of Presidential Democracy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 3-48 (essay is longer but focus on this section).


Matthew Shugart and John Carey. Presidents and Assemblies. Cambridge University Press.


John Londregan. Legislative Institutions and Ideology in Chile.

Courts


Owen Fiss, “The Right Degree of Independence,” from Irwin Stotsky, The Transition to Democracy in Latin America: The Role of the Judiciary


III. B) Unitary Government, Federalism, & Decentralization

A classic and a commentary

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America.* Author’s introduction, vol. 1 part 1 chapters 5-6 and last 3 sections of 8; vol. 1 part 2 chapter 6 sections 4-3; vol. 2 part 2 chapters 1-13; vol. 2 part 3 chapters 1-4, 13-14, 19.


Federalism & Decentralization


Majoritarian v. Consensual Combinations


Arend Lijphart. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, chapters 1-3 and as many of the subsequent chapters as required to distill the main findings and limitations.
III. C) Bureaucracy

*Origins and Logics*


*Variations in Form*
Silberman. *Cages of Reason*. As much as necessary to get the argument.


*Bureaucratic Accountability and Autonomy*


William Niskanen. *Bureaucracy and Representative Government*.


Ezra Suleiman. *Dismantling Democratic States*. 
Section IV: Participation, Collective Action, and Contentious Politics

IV.A) Rebellion, Revolution, and Violence
(see also, section on ethnic violence)

Types & Trends

Rebellion and Civil War


Revolution

Karl Marx. The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. (enough to get the idea)


James DeNardo. *Power in Numbers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985: introduction and chapters 1-2, 5, and 9-11 (don’t worry about following the equations; reading the bits in between is fine)


*Hidden Forms of Resistance*
James Scott. *Weapons of the Weak*, preface and chapters 1, 2, and 8.


Eric Hobsbawm. *Primitive Rebels* (suggested but not required)

*Nationalist Violence* (see also, section in Identity Politics)


IV. B) Participation, Collective Action & Social Movements

Who Votes?

Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Jae-On Kim. Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison (1978), chapters 1-7, 13, 14. (flawed but important to know the main ideas)

Collective Action v. Collective Behavior


Social Movements
Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald, eds., Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Cambridge University Press, 1996 (suggested, not required; a good Primer to start the debate on the social movements literature)


Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People’s Movements, pp. 1-37.

Herbert Kitschelt. “Political Opportunity Structure and Political Protest,” British Journal of Political
Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, enough to get the argument. (interest group, party, or social movement?)


Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge, 2001 (read just enough to get the main argument)

*Implications: Voice & Institutional Recuperation*


Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*. Cornell, 1998 (opening and concluding chapters)


IV.C) Interest Groups and Interest Intermediation

Albert O. Hirschman. *The Passions and the Interests*.


*Patterns*


*Causes and Consequences*


Section V: Electoral Politics

V.A) Electoral Systems & Representation

Representation


Susan Stokes. Mandates and Democracy: Neoliberalism by Surprise in Latin America. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, chapters 1,3,6 & 7 (more if necessary to get the argument)

Forms
Peter Mair, ed., The West European Party System. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, chapters 1, 5, 24 (classic essays by several authors)*


Effects of Electoral Rules


V.B) Voting & Party Systems

Who Votes?

Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Jae-On Kim. Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison (1978), chapters 1-7, 13, 14. (flawed but important to know the main ideas)


Partisan Identity & Partisanship


Voters & Party Systems
Peter Mair, ed., The West European Party System. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, chapters 1, 5,9, 24 (classic essays by several authors)*


Clientelism & Constituency Service


Experiment in Benin,” *World Politics* 55, 3 (2003): 399-422.

**Economic Voting**


**Dealignment, Realignment, and Innovation**


**Elections in New Democracies**

Timothy Colton. *Transitional Citizens*, chapters 1, 2, and 7.

Section VI: Political Culture and Identity/Ethnic Politics

VI.A) Political Culture

General conceptual works


Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia. parts I: 1-2, II and V:3.


A classic & the authors’ response to criticism...

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba. The Civic Culture, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, passim, but especially chapters 1, 5-6, 13 (1, 6, 7, 15 in hardback edition).*

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, eds. The Civic Culture Revisited, 1980, especially chapters 1, 2, and 10.

World Views and Political Repertoires


Ronald Inglehart. Culture Shift.
Trust and Social Capital


Diffusion of Cultures and Ideas


VI.B) Ethnicity, Identity Politics and Nationalism

Conceptualizing ethnicity, nations, nationalism


Ethnic mobilization/salience


Donald Kinder. *Divided by Color*.

*Taming Identity Politics*

Kenneth McRae, ed. *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974, pp. 2-27, 70-106, and 137-149 (includes a selection from Liiphart, who borrowed the idea from Calhoun and used it to explain patterns in the Netherlands)


*Ethnic Politics and Public Policy/Public Goods Provision*


*Ethnic Violence*


Section VII. Political Economy

VII.A) Introduction to Political Economy (read as a preface to the subsequent sections)


James Caporaso and David Levine. Theories of Political Economy. Cambridge University Press.
VII.B) Political Economy of Advanced Industrial Societies

Policy Making in Advanced Industrial Societies


Institutional varieties of capitalism


Politics of Macro-Economic Management


*Welfare States and the Politics of Redistribution*


Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1994, Chapters 1,2, 3, 4 or 5, 7


**Political Business Cycles and Economic Voting**


**International Economy and Domestic Political Alignments**


Stephen Krasner, “State Power and the Structure of International Trade,” *World*

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1 There is an overview of Nordhaus, Tufte, Rogoff, Hibbs, and Alesina in the *Annual Review of Political Science*. You may wish to read the overview plus Tufte and Hibbs.


VII.C) Political Economy of Development

The Concept of Development


States, Markets & Prosperity

Karl Polanyi, “The Economy as Instituted Process,” ch. 13 in Polanyi et al. Trade And Market in the Early Empires

Karl Polanyi. The Great Transformation.


Atul Kohli. State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery

Chalmers Johnson. From MITI and the Japanese Miracle. Chapters 1,2,7 and 9.


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Politics of Economic Reform/Policy Making


