**Political Science 43700**

**Comparative Historical Analysis**

Winter 2008  
Friday 9:30am - 12:20pm  
Pick 506

Dan Slater  
Pick 507  
Phone: 773-702-2941  
E-Mail: slater@uchicago.edu  
Website: [http://home.uchicago.edu/~slater](http://home.uchicago.edu/~slater)  
Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5pm

**Course Overview**

This graduate seminar critically considers the theoretical impact and methodological rigor of Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) in political science and sociology. Studies in this tradition employ a variety of research approaches, address a wide array of topics, and explore every imaginable region of the world. Yet its practitioners are “united by a commitment to offering historically grounded explanations of large-scale and substantively important outcomes.”

In the seminar’s opening week, we situate CHA in wider methodological and disciplinary contexts, and consider whether and how historically specific arguments might advance the quest for causal generalization in the social sciences. In each subsequent week, we pair up readings on specific methodological themes and dilemmas with substantive CHA works on what we might broadly term “political development.” Specifically, we will be examining CHA research on state-building, economic development, territorial politics, party formation, authoritarianism and democratization, and gender politics. On each of these topics, we will aim to cover both European and non-European perspectives, with the focus tilting somewhat toward the post-colonial world.

The primary goal of the seminar is to help its participants – including the instructor! – become more savvy consumers and, if they so choose, producers of scholarship in the evolving CHA tradition. As such, its approach to methodology is more practical than philosophical. Questions regarding the philosophy of science will certainly demand our attention; but we will be more focused on discussing how to improve the (inevitably imperfect) causal inferences in CHA work than on determining such scholarship’s epistemological value vis-à-vis other research traditions. *Students will be consistently encouraged throughout the quarter to draw lessons for their own research projects, and to discuss their own, evolving projects with the entire group.* Last but not least, the topical readings should allow us all to learn a great deal of substantive importance on some of the most important topics in comparative politics and sociology.
Weekly Readings and Writing Assignments

The following six books are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore and on reserve at Regenstein Library. (Article- and chapter-length readings can be accessed through the course Chalk site, under “Library Course Reserves.”)

- James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge 2003)
- David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development* (Cornell 1999)
- Daniel Ziblatt, *Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the Puzzle of Federalism* (Princeton 2006)

There are two types of writing assignments. First, each student is required to write three short (about 3-4 page) response papers to the weekly readings over the course of the quarter. Which week these essays are written is at the student’s discretion, with one exception: everyone must contribute an essay on the readings in Week 2 (January 18th). Please e-mail me a copy of your essay by 8:30am on the day of class, and hand in a hard copy of your essay at the beginning of seminar.

Each student must also turn in a final written project, which can take one of two forms: (1) a 10-15 page research proposal, outlining a future or ongoing student project that incorporates comparative-historical methods; or (2) a 15-20 page analytic review of an ongoing substantive debate in the CHA literature. All students will have the opportunity to discuss their final projects in a small-group setting during class sessions on February 22nd and March 14th.

Final grades will be based on the final written project (40% of total), the weekly papers (10% each for a total of 30%), and class participation (30%).
Course Schedule

WEEK 1 – January 11th
Introduction and Course Overview

WEEK 2 – January 18th
Defining and Situating CHA
- Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis*, Chs. 1, 2, 9, 11, and 12.

WEEK 3 – January 25th
Case Studies and Early Modern European States
- Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution*, all.

WEEK 4 – February 1st
Path Dependence and Asian Developmental States
- Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*, all.
WEEK 5 – February 8\textsuperscript{th}  
Subnational Analysis and Territorial Politics  
- Ziblatt, \textit{Structuring the State}, all.

WEEK 6 – February 15\textsuperscript{th}  
Critical Junctures and Party Development  

*** DISTRIBUTE ONE-PAGE PROJECT OUTLINE TO ENTIRE CLASS BY TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19\textsuperscript{TH} – TO BE DISCUSSED IN SEMINAR ***

WEEK 7 – February 22\textsuperscript{nd}  
Agency, Complexity, and Institutional Change  
- Ira Katznelson, “Periodization and Preferences: Reflections on Purposive Action in Comparative Historical Social Science,” Ch. 8 in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.), pp. 270-301.  
- Kathleen Thelen, “How Institutions Evolve,” Ch. 6 in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.), pp. 208-240.  
WEEK 8 – February 29th
Deterministic Causation and Political Regimes in Interwar Europe
• James Mahoney, “Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis,” Ch. 10 in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.), pp. 337-372.
• James Mahoney, “Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism,” Ch. 4 in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.), pp. 131-174.
• Capoccia, *Defending Democracy*, all.

WEEK 9 – March 7th
Contrasting Temporalities and Comparing Gender Politics
• Paul Pierson, “Big, Slow-Moving, and….Invisible: Macrosocial Processes in the Study of Comparative Politics,” Ch. 5 in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.), pp. 177-207.

WEEK 10 – March 14th
Class Presentations

*** FINAL PROJECTS DUE AT 5PM WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19TH ***