PSCI 414: Comparative Politics of the Welfare State
Spring 2019
Thursdays 1:30-4:30 pm
Van Pelt 113

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Overview
This seminar provides an overview of the structure and functions of welfare states in the rich, industrialized democracies, and covers key arguments and debates about the emergence and contemporary fate of these welfare states. The approach is broadly comparative, but throughout the course discussions will often emphasize drawing ideas from the experiences of other countries to inform policy solutions to problems we confront in the US. The course covers the varieties and tasks of modern welfare states; classic theories about the relationship between markets, classes, and social protection; competing explanations for why modern welfare states emerge and why they differ from one another; how welfare states are shaped by social forces such as organized labor and the self-employed, political institutions, and societal views of appropriate gender relationships; challenges to the welfare state that emerge from changing labor market, demographic, and social conditions in the highly industrialized nations; and the political dynamics of reforms to the welfare state.

Students will participate actively in seminar discussions and complete a major research paper. Graduate students will complete additional readings as noted and will write an article-length paper.

Statement on academic integrity and plagiarism
The University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity states: “Since the University is an academic community, its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Essential to the success of this educational mission is a commitment to the principles of academic integrity. Every member of the University community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty at all times. Students, as members of the community, are also responsible for adhering to the principles and spirit of the [...] Code of Academic Integrity.” The seven points of this code (on cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submission, misrepresentation, facilitating dishonesty, and unfair advantage) can be found at http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html.
**Course Requirements**

1. (25%) Informed participation in weekly discussions, based on thorough preparation of the assigned readings
2. (10%) In-class presentation of a policy area
3. (25%) 7-8 page research proposal, **due via email at 5pm on March 14.**
4. (40%) 20 page [35 pages for graduate students] research paper **due via email AND in hard copy (under my office door) by 12:00 pm on May 14.** There can be no extensions, as May 14 is the last day of the semester. If you finish your paper earlier than May 14, I would be very grateful to receive it early, since I will have only 2 days to grade.

**Course Readings**

The books listed below are available for purchase at the Penn bookstore. They are also on reserve in Rosengarten.


This ebook is available via the Penn library web site:

  - http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/1543709

All other readings will be available on the course Canvas site.

The readings for graduate students are suggested ADDITIONAL readings. They do not need to be completed in the week for which they are assigned, but they are essential readings for doctoral and masters students interested in gaining foundational knowledge. You may wish to purchase some of these books for your personal libraries.

When you read, please be sure to take note of the year of publication; the author’s/authors’ name(s), gender(s), and number; and do your best to figure out who these people are. Are they politicians or policy actors? Journalists? Academics? If so, what discipline? Google is your friend.

**I strongly encourage you to form reading/discussion groups to share notes and critical summaries, and to discuss the assigned readings outside of class. Students who do this generally do very well in the course, while those who attempt to go it alone have much more trouble participating effectively and writing high-quality papers.**
**In-class presentation of a policy area**
During the first half of the class, we will be amassing a body of basic factual information about welfare state provisions in different countries that will help stimulate you to think about potential research topics for your final papers. To this end, alongside the thematic readings, each week a student or students will be assigned to make a brief (5-7-minute) presentation about cross-national patterns of social provision in a particular area.

In order to prepare for this presentation, you will need to read (a) the chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State* pertaining to that policy area [under “Policies”] and (b) the parts of the regional chapters in the *Handbook* [under “Established Welfare States”] that can help explain cross-national variation in the policies and outcomes. You are not responsible for reading any additional sources, although you may if you wish.

Your presentation should address the following questions, insofar as information is available in the *Handbook* (for some policy areas, some of this information may be missing):
1. What are the main dimensions on which social policies in this particular area VARY?
2. What groups of countries are similar/different on these dimensions?
3. What is your best guess as to why countries cluster the way they do?

Please use slides, handouts or visual aids to assist your audience in retaining the information you are presenting, and DO NOT go longer than 7 minutes.

**Research proposal**
Your research proposal must include all of the following elements:
1. The question to be asked in the paper (see below)
2. A 1-2 paragraph statement of the significance of this question for the study of comparative social policy
   - what theoretical questions, debates or controversies will answering your question help to resolve?
   - if it’s not obvious, a BRIEF explanation (just 1 or 2 sentences) of why answering your question is of substantive or policy importance
3. Your proposed answer to the question (necessarily preliminary, but you must have an informed hypothesis at this time)
4. A list of major alternative hypothesized answers to the problem, which you will generate by drawing on common sense and on the theories you have read in this and other political science classes
5. An explanation of how you will evaluate the merits of your own proposed answer versus the competing hypotheses:
   - what case comparisons will you use, and why?
   - what evidence (data) would support or refute your argument, and competing hypothesis? What evidence in the world would convince you that your theory is wrong?
   - a bibliography indicating where you will get the primary and secondary data that you need to test your argument against alternative hypotheses (the bibliography is not included in the page limit)
Your research question should address something that is PUZZLING, and should generally be a WHY question: We expect (based on the following theories or patterns) to see this, but we see that; WHY do we see this rather than that? Identifying an empirical puzzle that needs solving, can be solved in 20 or 30 pages, but has not already been worked to death, is in many ways the most challenging part of writing a research paper. The good news is that in most cases, once you find a good puzzle, the rest of the paper is easy.

Developing the proposal will require you to do some serious research up front in order to identify your research question, specify hypotheses (both your own and others'), and come up with a reasonable research design, including selecting appropriate comparison cases. You are strongly advised to meet with me during office hours at least once before turning in the proposal.

Proposals will be graded according to the following rubric:

1. **Research question:** ____/25 points
   Is there a clearly stated empirical puzzle that needs solving (i.e. has not already been solved), that can be solved in 20-30 pages?

2. **Significance:** ____/15 points
   Is there a statement of how answering the research question will contribute to theoretical questions, debates or controversies in the welfare state literature?

3. **Proposed answer:** ____/5 points
   Is there a clearly stated, preliminary answer to the research question that is plausible in light of the course readings/major theories about welfare states?

4. **Alternative hypotheses:** ____/25 points
   Is there a comprehensive list of major plausible alternative explanations for the puzzle that are suggested by the course readings or by common sense?

5. **Research design components:** ____/30 points
   Is there a clear and logically compelling plan for determining which of the hypothesized answers to the research question is correct?
   - (max 5/30) What comparisons and/or counterfactuals will be used?
   - (max 20/30) What evidence (data) would support or refute alternative hypotheses?
   - (max 5/30) What primary and secondary sources will be consulted in order to generate the data needed to evaluate the hypotheses?

Getting the proposal right the first time is not easy, especially if you haven’t written a major research paper before. **Students who do not meet with me in office hours at least once before turning in the proposal very often receive very low/failing grades on this assignment.** Please be sure to consult with me before submitting your proposal.
Research papers

- Papers are due May 14 in paper **via email AND in hard copy (under my office door) by 12:00 pm on May 14.** There can be no extensions, as May 14 is the last day of the semester. If you finish your paper earlier than May 14, I would be very grateful to receive it early, since I will have only 2 days to grade.

- Undergraduate student papers should be approximately 20 pages in length (and not more than 25), excluding bibliography, tables, graphs, footnotes, etc. Text should be double-spaced (NOT 1.5 spaced), with 1” margins, in a 12-point font. Graduate student papers should be approximately 35 pages in length excluding bibliography, tables, etc.

- Cite references using in-text parenthetical citations (APSA/Harvard style), with a complete bibliography at the end of the paper.

- Papers turned in after the last day of the semester (May 14) will receive a grade of 0 except in the case of documented medical or family emergency, in which case a grade of Incomplete for the course will be given.

Papers will be evaluated based on two sets of criteria: content and presentation.

**Content:**

A complete research paper contains:

- A research question: A clearly articulated question or puzzle to be resolved by the paper.

- A thesis statement: A clearly articulated statement of your answer to the research question, in the form of a thesis statement or leading hypothesis.

- A “so what” statement: a description of the question’s relevance to real-world problems and to the political science literature in question.

- Discussion of relevant course readings as they related to the topic at hand: How does your research cast doubt upon, corroborate, or extend the theories we have read in class (or other theories in political science and related disciplines with which you may be familiar); which major debates does your research cast light upon?

- A logical research design: Selection of cases and structure of argumentation that allows for testing of multiple rival hypotheses. Be as explicit as you can about what part of your research design allows you to make which parts of your argument.

- Evidence: Presentation of facts (e.g. legislative history, public opinion data, electoral results) and scholarly opinions (from reputable secondary sources) that bolster your thesis and help to refute alternative hypotheses.

- Evaluation of alternative hypotheses: Consideration of the most likely objections to your thesis that would be implied by common sense or by the existing literature on your topic.
Presentation:
College-level writing is:

- Free of typographical, spelling and grammatical errors. Please note that spell-check and grammar-check programs are not a substitute for careful proofreading.
- Correct and well-organized at the micro level (e.g. diction and word choices are appropriate to the context; sentences are of a reasonable length and say what they mean to say; ideas are linked by appropriate transition words; paragraphs begin with a topic sentence).
- Well-organized at the macro level (introduction presents the research question and main hypotheses; body is devoted to an orderly presentation of background information, supporting evidence, and evaluation alternative hypotheses; reader is reminded of the relevance of specific steps in the argument to the overall case being made in the paper; conclusion restates the author’s hypothesis and the main lines of argumentation that demonstrate its plausibility).

Papers in the “A” range contain all of the following:

- A highly innovative research question or research design.
- A thesis that is original and pushes the literature forward in new directions.
- Extensive original research or an outstanding use of secondary sources.
- Skillful consideration and disarming of alternative hypotheses that are widely accepted as correct.
- Exceptionally lucid or elegant writing.

Papers in the “B” range contain three or four of those five elements; papers in the “C” range contain two; papers in the “D” range contain one; and failing papers contain none of the above.
Course Outline

Week 1 (Jan 17)
Introduction

Week 2 (Jan 24)
Where do welfare states come from?

Policy presentations:
Social assistance

Week 3 (Jan 31)
Welfare states as class formations

Graduate students:

Policy presentations:
Work accident and sickness benefits
Unemployment insurance

Week 4 (Feb 7)
Culture, institutions and the welfare state

Graduate students:

**Policy presentations:**
Education
Family benefits and services

**Week 5 (Feb 14)**
**Decommodification and recommodation**

Graduate students:
• Esping-Andersen, entire.

**Policy presentations:**
Old-age pensions
Disability

**Week 6 (Feb 21)**
**Postindustrial pressures**

Graduate students:
Policy presentations:
Labor market activation
Housing

Week 7 (Feb 28)
The Exceptional American Welfare State?

Graduate students:

Policy presentations:
Activation
Long-term care

SPRING BREAK (Mar 7)

Week 8 (Mar 14) – NO CLASS
Paper proposals due to Prof. Lynch via email by 5pm on Mar 14.

Week 9 (Mar 21)
Wealth, poverty and inequality

Graduate students:

**Week 10 (Mar 28)**

**Health and Health Care**

Graduate students:

**Week 11 (Apr 4)**

**Gender and family policies**
• Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers, eds. *Gender Equality: Transforming the Family Division of Labor* (New York, NY: Verso, 2009), CH 1 (Gornick and Meyers), CH 6 (Orloff), CH 10 (Zippel), CH 14 (Morgan).

Graduate students:

**Week 12 (Apr 11)**

**Race, immigration, and the welfare state**

Graduate students:

**Week 13 (Apr 18)**

**The future of the welfare state**


Graduate students:

**Week 14 (Apr 26)**

**Paper presentations**