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Political Science 3363: Interchangeables, Influentials, and Essentials

Course Description

Do you want to know how to obtain power? How to influence the powerful? Or even how to unseat those in power? In this course, we will focus on how leaders, of *all* types, get and keep their jobs. It is all about those whom the leader finds to be interchangeable, those the leader finds influential, and those who are essential. You will learn the “Rules to Rule By” and why, when leaders follow them, they often behave badly, causing those they govern to suffer. When looking at those hoping to stay in power we will deal with the questions they must ask themselves. At what rate should they tax and from whom should they extract the resources they need to stay in power? On what activities should governments spend these funds? If they give foreign aid, to whom should it flow? If they receive foreign aid, to what ends should it be put? When does going to war make sense?

Of course, suffering citizens often resist or even rebel. So, we will also try to understand what pushes people to oppose their governments and what strategies they adopt when they choose to do so. In the process, we will get to address several additional interesting questions. Can citizens “flip” the “Rules to Rule By” in order to outwit their leaders? In other words, can we use the same perspective of leaders trying to retain power to develop what we might call the “Rules to Revolt By”? Can nonviolent protest bring down a government or does the regime have to suffer casualties before it will release its grip on power? Who within a given society is most likely to resist? What role can foreigners play in toppling a dictatorial regime? How has the process of resisting a regime changed with the advent of the internet and the spread of social media?

In addition to drawing on historical cases from all over the world, we will be examining real, recent (even ongoing) cases of the politics of political survival. We will be as concrete as possible in empirical terms, attempting to develop measures or indicators of concepts of interest in order to make comparisons across cases. When possible, we will go beyond looking at a case or two by making use of large datasets about regime types and political conflict. Beyond empirical patterns, we will be making use of and testing the limits of a theory – its creators call it “selectorate theory.”

Political science requires a systematic form of critical thinking that emulates the scientific method. Therefore, we will not only discuss specific historical events but also ways to generalize from them to create conceptual constructs and theoretical lessons. It is the role of theory to guide us in our search for general lessons about politics — in this case how the nature of a regime simply trying to persist explains its behavior and its likelihood of changing.

We are going to test the boundaries of selectorate theory in two ways. Its creators attempted to design it to be a theory of political survival that works *everywhere* – at all times, in all countries, and across political regimes of endless variety. We will try to remain conscientious about asking ourselves whether this is true. Second, the creators of selectorate theory focus on the actions of those seeking to obtain power and those seeking to hold on to power. We are going to push the theory to see what it can tell us about those over whom power is being exercised. In other words, can a theory about political survival also serve as a theory for explaining how to overthrow those attempting to remain in power?

Course Requirements

I will evaluate your grasp of the subject matter in four ways: in-class examinations, papers, presentations, and other forms of class participation. The specifics of each of these components are explained in greater detail below.

In-Class Examinations. Each exam will be worth 20% of your final grade and there will be two in total – one near the midpoint of the semester and one on the last day of class (see the course schedule below for the exam dates). The exams will be comprised of short essay questions, multiple choice, true or false, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc.

Take-Home Papers. Each paper will be worth 20% of your final grade and there will be two in total – one near the midpoint of the semester and one on the final exam date (see the course schedule below for the due dates). The specific requirements for each paper will be circulated prior to the due dates. Your paper should be a thorough response to the prompt. I will be happy to consult with you as you do your research and organize your paper. I strongly encourage you to get an early start on each paper, leaving yourself time to accommodate any challenges that emerge and to capitalize on my feedback.

Presentations. In small groups of two or three students, you will prepare a presentation for the class. The presentation will be worth 10% of your final grade. The presentation should last about 45 minutes or a little longer. Dates are specified in the course schedule below. Your presentation must

summarize the day's reading, *update* us on the case/actors covered, and provide an *analysis* of the case using selectorate theory. You are strongly encouraged to put your case in some kind of comparative perspective with data from other cases. You are also strongly encouraged to make use of the scholarly literature on the themes (not necessarily the case) involved. When putting together your presentations pay very careful attention to these instructions and the more detailed instructions on the prompt we will provide.

Participation. Attendance on a daily basis is not, *strictly speaking*, required. However, another 10% of your final grade will be a function of your regular contribution to our discussions. Each student will start the semester with 6 points "in the bank." Each day in class I will draw students' names at random. If his or her name is drawn, a student will be asked to answer a question either about the readings for that day or about some facet of the lecture presentation. If the student answers correctly, a point will be added to his or her bank. If the student is present and answers incorrectly, there will be no impact on his or her point total. If a student's name is called and he or she is not in attendance that day, he or she will be docked a point. In this way, the prepared student who attends class regularly should have 10 or more points in the bank by the end of the semester. Having 10 points or more will warrant an A+ on this portion of the grading scheme. I also reserve the right to award points, daily or at the end of the semester, for students who make contributions to discussions without having their names drawn. If high levels of participation become the norm, I'll stop drawing names and those who help drive daily discussions will be rewarded accordingly.

Course Policies

Please read these additional policies carefully. They will govern various aspects of how the class will function this semester.

One-on-One Consultation. I strongly encourage you to stop by frequently to see me about the course. Just send me an e-mail, and we will find a mutually convenient time to get together. Staying engaged with the course materials and getting informal feedback at regular intervals will have a big impact on your performance on the required assignments.

Due Dates. Due dates are detailed in the syllabus. If you foresee a conflict with some due date, see me immediately to talk about options, if I can offer any. I do not grant last-minute exceptions, and I will penalize any late work severely.

Special Accommodations. If you require any, please set up a time to meet with me early in the semester so that I can make sure your needs are met.

Attendance. I highly recommend it! It can directly and indirectly impact your grade. See the participation description above.

Lecture Slides. My lecture slides will be available on-line for one week after the date of the lecture. You will not be able to download them for future use – you can only view them for that one week period. I suggest that you take notes in class on a daily basis, but when something is particularly complex or our pace is rapid, simply put a message to yourself in your notes to review the relevant slides before the week is up. If after reviewing my slides you have questions, set up a time to consult one-on-one. You must reach out to me to schedule a consultation within one week of the lecture in question.

Technology. There will be times during the semester when I will encourage you to make use of laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Other than those exact times, please **abstain entirely from texting, following your e-mail, surfing the web, etc.** Students who are repeatedly disruptive to my train of thought or to the focus of their fellow students will be penalized in terms of their participation grade. Repeat offenders will be administratively dropped from the course without receiving academic credit. I cannot overstate how important it is to me that you give your undivided attention to the course for a mere 160 minutes per week – or at least appear to be doing so. Take my word for it, you are a bad actor. Feigning interest while peaking at the phone sticking out of your bag or from under your thigh is not your strong suit. In fact, you are so bad at it that it makes you almost more disruptive than if you had cracked open a newspaper and kicked back with your feet on the desk. So, don't do it. Really, I mean it.

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresenting one's identity, etc. will not be tolerated.

Please review the university's policies in this regard at:

<http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>.

Required Readings

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, and Alastair Smith. 2011. *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior is Almost Always Good Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.

Popovic, Srdja. 2015. *Blueprint for Revolution: How to Use Rice Pudding, Lego Men, and Other Nonviolent Techniques to Galvanize Communities, Overthrow Dictators, or Simply Change the World*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

Additional readings (denoted with an asterisk) will be provided by Professor Crisp.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tuesday, August 29

No Readings

Class logistics

Thursday, August 31

BdM & Smith ix-xxv, 1-20

Some Implications of Selectorate Theory

THE LOGIC OF POLITICAL SURVIVAL

Tuesday, September 5

BdM & Smith ix-xxv, 1-20

A Theory of Politics that Applies to All Regimes Types

Thursday, September 7

BdM & Smith 21-48

Coming to Power

Tuesday, September 12

BdM & Smith 49-74

Staying in Power

Thursday, September 14

BdM & Smith 75-100

Steal from the Poor, Give to the Rich

Tuesday, September 19

BdM & Smith 101-126

Getting and Spending

Thursday, September 21

BdM & Smith 127-160

Absolute Corruption Empowers Absolutely

Tuesday, September 26

BdM & Smith 161-194

Foreign Aid

Thursday, September 28

BdM & Smith 225-250

War, Peace, and World Order

Tuesday, October 3

BdM & Smith 251-282

What Is To Be Done?

Thursday, October 5

BdM & Smith ix-194 & 225-282

Prepare for Exam

Tuesday, October 10

BdM & Smith 195-224

The People Revolt

Thursday, October 12

No Readings

In-Class Exam on The Logic of Political Survival

Tuesday, October 17

No Readings

No Class – Fall Break

Thursday, October 19

No Readings

Paper 1: Develop a Plan to Help a Regime Survive

THE LOGIC OF POLITICAL REVOLT

Tuesday, October 24
*TBA

The Square

Thursday, October 26
Popovic 3-28

It Can Happen Here

Tuesday, October 31
Popovic 29-54

Presentation by Group 1
Dream Big, Start Small

Thursday, November 2
Popovic 55-76

Presentation by Group 2
Vision of Tomorrow

Tuesday, November 7
Popovic 77-96

Presentation by Group 3
The Almighty Pillars of Power

Thursday, November 9
Popovic 97-124

Presentation by Group 4
Laugh Your Way to Victory

Tuesday, November 14
Popovic 125-150

Presentation by Group 5
Make Oppression Backfire

Thursday, November 16
Popovic 151-172

Presentation by Group 6
It's Unity, Stupid!

Tuesday, November 21
Popovic 173-194

Presentation by Group 7
Plan Your Way to Victory

Thursday, November 23
No Readings

No Class – Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, November 28
Popovic 195-214

Presentation by Group 8
The Demons of Violence

Thursday, November 30
Popovic 215-238

Presentation by Group 9
Finish What You Started

Tuesday, December 5
Popovic 239-263

Presentation by Group 10
It Had to Be You/Before We Say Goodbye

Thursday, December 7
No Readings

In-Class Exam on The Logic of Political Revolt

Wednesday, December 20
No Readings

Paper 2: Develop a Plan to Help a Group Revolt