Topics in Comparative Politics: Governance and Accountability

Course Description
This seminar explores parts of the broad literature in political science and economics on the fundamental topics of governance and accountability. These terms are widely used in academic literature and in popular conversation, but do we really understand what they mean conceptually, and do we have ways of observing and measuring them? This course will ask students to develop their own answers to the following questions: (1) What is governance? (2) What is accountability? (3) How do we observe and measure governance and accountability? (4) Do elections make politicians accountable, and how? (5) What is clientelism, and how does it undermine accountability relationships? (6) Can we talk about governance and accountability in non-democracies? (7) What are the economic and public goods consequences of governance and accountability? and (8) Where does good governance come from?

Course Goals
Governance and accountability are core political science concepts. Students should leave the course with well-defined opinions on the meaning of these terms and with examples of how these concepts have been rigorously used in political science research as both explanatory and outcome variables. This course material is expected to help students who are preparing to take field exams in Comparative Politics or American Politics.

Through engagement with the readings in this course, students also are expected to improve a diverse set of social scientific skills related to (1) concept creation and definition; (2) measurement; (3) theory building; (4) reading and understanding formal theory; (5) empirical research design; (6) data collection; (7) data analysis; and (8) interpreting results for the purposes of prescribing policy.

Course Requirements
Our goal as a class is to better understand the ways in which the assigned authors have conducted their research, to critically interrogate the decisions that they have made, and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their particular approaches.

There are two assignments in the course that relate to this goal in different ways.

First, the course is organized as a reading seminar, where students are expected to attend all sessions, complete all readings, and come to class fully prepared to discuss the readings. The class is designed to be highly participatory. For each class meeting, one student will take responsibility for developing a set of questions about (or brief critical commentaries on) the readings. The student will distribute these questions – which should be around 600 words in length – to the entire class no later than 5:00 p.m. the day before the seminar meeting. Based on that day’s conversation, the student will then write an analytical essay synthesizing some elements of the conversation in a way that critically engages with the readings. This essay is due to the instructor one week following the class meeting.
Although there sometimes seems to be an expectation that students offer devastating critiques or brilliant addendums to readings, the most educational moments for a class easily can come from questions that express a shortcoming of comprehension. If there is something that you have struggled with understanding, please feel free to write a question or comment based on that struggle.

The goal of these weekly questions and the subsequent analytical essay is to facilitate you interacting with the readings as a consumer in the way that you will interact with most academic output that you encounter over the course of your career.

Second, students will write a research paper. The paper may be either theoretical or empirical in nature, and it may be based on replicating an existing paper, but it must include original analysis (i.e., a review article is not an acceptable paper). Students should meet with the instructor early in the semester to discuss their intended topic.

Students will first submit a research design to the instructor that (1) briefly outlines the topic and research question; (2) states preliminary hypotheses; (3) discusses the data or analytical method that will be used to test these hypotheses; and (4) describes potential pitfalls of the research design.

Students will then submit both a first draft and a final draft of the paper. The paper should be organized with (1) an introduction; (2) a review of relevant literature; (3) a theoretical section; (4) a discussion of data and methods; (5) a presentation of results; and (6) a discussion of the results and possible future research directions.

The goal of this assignment is to have you carefully think through the steps of the research process as you will do throughout your career. The assignment has been broken down to help you think both about preliminary planning for research and also interpretation of research results.

The due dates for the assignments are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Essay</td>
<td>One week subsequent to assigned class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Friday 2 October at 5:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Draft of Paper</td>
<td>Friday 13 November at 5:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft of Paper</td>
<td>Friday 11 December at 5:00 p.m.</td>
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</tbody>
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The distribution of grading is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of Discussion Questions</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Essay</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper First Draft</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper Final Version</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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Schedule of Readings

Readings listed under “Additional Readings” are suggested for your reference. All other readings are required. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the reading list over the course of the semester. Students also are encouraged to bring particular readings of interest to the instructor’s attention and/or to make suggestions about modifications to the schedule of readings.

1. 24 August – Introduction

2. 31 August – Concepts and Theories of Accountability


Additional Readings


7 September – Labor Day – No Class

3. 14 September – Modeling Accountability


**Additional Readings**


4. **21 September – Observing Accountability by Studying Voters**


**Additional Readings**


28 September – No Class

2 October – Research Designs Due

5. 5 October – Observing Accountability by Studying Governments


Additional Readings


6. **12 October – Concepts of Governance**


**Additional Readings**


7. **19 October – Measuring Governance**


**Additional Readings**


8. **26 October – Governance and Economic Growth**


Additional Readings


9. 2 November – The Origins of Good Governance


Nikhar Gaikwad. 2014. “East India Companies and Long-Term Economic Change in India,” Yale University.
Additional Readings


10. 9 November – Accountability and Service Delivery


Additional Readings


13 November – First Draft of Paper Due

11. 16 November – Clientelism


Additional Readings


23 November – Fall Break – No Class
12. 30 November – Corruption


Additional Reading


13. 7 December – Decentralization and Accountability


Additional Readings


11 December – Final Papers Due

WINTER BREAK READING / OTHER POSSIBLE TOPICS

I. Natural Resources and the Fiscal Contract


Additional Readings


II. Community Governance


Additional Readings


III. Foreign Aid and Accountability


Additional Reading


