CPO 6091: Seminal in Comparative Politics

Wednesdays 6:00pm – 8:50pm - - Spring 2017

Instructor: Konstantin Ash (Konstantin.Ash@ucf.edu) Office Hours: WF 1-3p @ HPH 311A

Course Description

Comparative politics is the study of the differences and similarities in political institutions and behavior in countries around the world. This course intended as a broad survey of research across comparative politics, divided across two broader groupings: the study of functional political institutions in developed societies and the study of less functional political institutions in the developing world. Fundamentally, comparative politics is an effort to understand why politics differs in countries across the world and that will be our goal in the class.

There are several additional learning goals for the class: **First,** the readings are intended for you to gain a broad understanding of research in comparative politics and be able to engage with this research as fellow researchers. They are roughly the same readings I did while in grad school and they are fundamental to understanding the origins and direction of the field. **Second,** as graduate students and potential future practitioners in the field, it is vital for you to engage critically with the work already done, thus, we will do our best to not only understand the readings, but to find flaws in them and potential avenues for improvement in future research. **Third,** It is vital that, again, as researchers, you are able to produce your own research that both engages with prior work on comparative politics AND clearly improves upon that work in some capacity. This is why you will be required to develop a research paper in this class through several set deadlines. As we are on a semester system, we have the advantage of being able to delve deeper and develop more coherent research than a quarter system, for instance, would allow.

Assignments

Research Paper

Students will be expected to complete a research paper during the course. The research paper should take the form of an academic article that students could conceivably submit for publication and/or submit to a conference. In order to facilitate the smooth flow of research throughout the semester, there will be several deadlines for developing the paper:

- February 11 @ 12:00p. Submit research question and *at least* five articles or books that have answered the same research question or a similar question.

- March 4 @ 12:00p. Submit critical literature review that incorporates previous articles or books, as well as other relevant or suggested articles or books, along with your answer to your research question, which should take up the theory.
- April 1 @ 12:00p. Submit hypotheses based on your theory and ways you envision testing the hypotheses. This could include, but is not limited to, qualitative case study methods, survey methods or large-N statistical analysis. If using qualitative methods, please outline which cases you are selecting and why they are appropriate. If using quantitative methods, please identify potential data sources or feasible original ways of gathering data within the next month.

Please submit the above three assignments to me through e-mail. The only boundary for this article is that it must, in some conceivable fashion, fall in the realm of the discipline of comparative politics.

Original work for this type of paper is preferred, but please talk to me if you would like to continue on working on a project you have submitted for a previous class (I will probably like to see what you have done in advance) or if you would like to continue on something you've been working on independently as a side project (this is more acceptable and even encouraged).

The research paper is due on **Tuesday, May 2 @ 12:00p**.

Discussion Papers

For **two** of the weeks after week 1, students are expected to submit discussion papers and then lead discussion that week. The discussion papers should be 4-5 page critical analyses of **at least** three of the required or recommended readings from the assigned week. As part of a critical analysis, students should include a brief summary of an author's argument or research design, a passage on how the papers fit together as part of the broader research agenda for that week and a broader passage on aspects of either/both the papers or the broader research agenda that the student believes could be improved upon.

In addition to the paper, students writing papers in a particular week are expected to write **3-5** questions that are intended to provoke discussion in the class and to briefly discuss their findings and present the discussion questions during class in the relevant week.

Participation

Since this is a graduate seminar, participation is integral for the smooth flow of the course. My role is not to lecture or even present the readings to a great extent, but to facilitate discussion among yourselves. This means that your participation is necessary for the class, both in relaying the topics of the paper

Plagiarism

There is a ZERO tolerance policy on plagiarism. If you are found having copied any substantial portion of your paper from other sources without having first accredited them, you will either have large amounts of points deducted from your paper grade or will fail the class altogether. Please consult the UCF Office of Student Conduct's Rules of Conduct for more information.

Grade Breakdown

Research Paper – 40%
Discussion Papers – 20% each

Participation – 20%

Course Schedule and Readings

Each week's courses will follow the same structure. There are required readings that should be done before each class and recommended readings that you should look at if you are either the discussant for that week or writing a research paper on a subject that broaches the week. This is also a good list to have for future literature reviews on papers related to comparative politics.

Week 1 (Jan. 11) - Research Design, Reading Academic Research, Institutions and Institutional Analysis

Required Reading:

- Adam Przeworski, "Institutions Matter?" Government and Opposition 39, 2004: 527-540
- Geddes, Barbara. Paradigms and Sand Castles. University of Michigan Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

In-Class Tutorials: Giving Presentations, Critical Approach to Academic Research

Week 2 (Jan. 18) - The State and State Capacity

Required Reading:

- Tilly, Charles. 1990. Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990-1990. Cambridge: Blackwell: Chapter 3.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. States and Power in Africa. Princeton: Princeton University Press: Introduction and Chapters 1 and 4.
- King, Charles. 2001. "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States." World Politics 53(4): 524-552.
- Kasela, Kumuli. 2007. Tax Me if You Can: Ethnic Geography, Democracy, and the Taxation of Agriculture in Africa. American Political Science Review, Vol.101, Issue 1:159 University Press. pp. 11-31.
- Spruyt, Hendrik. 1994. The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change. Princeton University Press. Chs. 3 and 8.

Recommended Reading:

- Olson, M. The Rise and Decline of Nations.
- Migdal, J. Strong Societies and Weak States.
- Bates, Robert H. 2008. When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa, Cambridge University Press: New York.
- Bayart, Jean-Francois. 1989. The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly, Longman: New York: .

WEEK 3 (JAN. 25) - DEMOCRACY: DEFINITIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Required Reading:

- Schmitter, Philippe C, and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is. . . and Is Not." Journal of Democracy 2(3): 75-88.
- Robert A. Dahl. Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971. Read pages 1-16, 231-49.
- Adam Przeworski et al. Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Ch. 2
- Lipset, S.1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Legitimacy." American Political Science Review 53(1): 69-105.
- Guillermo O'Donnell. "Illusions about Consolidation." Journal of Democracy 7 (April 1996), 34-51.
- Richard Gunther, P. Nikoforos Diamondouros, and Hans-Jurge Puhle. "O 'Donnell's Illusions: A Rejoinder." Journal of Democracy 7 (October 1996), 151-59.
- Barry R. Weingast, "Political foundations of democracy and the rule of law," American Political Science Review, 91 (2), June 1997: 245-263.

Recommended Reading:

- Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman. The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Read Chapters 1, 4-5, 9-11.
- Andrew Roberts. The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe: Public Preferences and Policy Reforms. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- John B. Londregan and Keith T. Poole, "Does High Income Promote Democracy?," World Politics, 49: 1-30.
- Douglass C. North and Barry R. Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England" The Journal of Economic History Vol. 49, No. 4 (Dec., 1989), pp. 803-832.

WEEK 4 (FEB. 1) - ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

Required Reading:

- Carles Boix, "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies." American Political Science Review 93, 3 (September 1999), 609-24
- Cusack, Thomas, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. 2007. 'Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems," American Political Science Review 101, August 2007.
- Kreuzer, Marcus. 2009. Historical Knowledge and Quantitative Analysis: The Case of the Origins of Proportional Representation, American Political Science Review. Vol. 104, No. 2: pp 369 - 392
- Gary Cox, Making Votes Count. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Chs. 2, 4, 11, 15.

- Arend Lijphart. Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Chapters 5 and 8.

Recommended Reading:

- Cusack, Thomas, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. 2009. Coevolution of Capitalism and Political Representation: The Choice of Electoral Systems, American Political Science Review. Vol. 104, No. 2:pp 393 - 403
- Boix, Carles. 2009. Electoral Markets, Party Strategies, and Proportional Representation, American Political Science Review. Vol. 104, No. 2:pp 404 - 41
- William H. Riker, "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law." American Political Science Review 76, 4 (December 1982), 753-766.

Week 5 (Feb. 8) - Presidentialism and Parliamentarism

Required Reading:

- Jose Antonio Cheibub, Presidentialism Parliamentarism, and Democracy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, chs. 2, 5-7.
- Arend Lijphart. Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Chapter 7, 11.
- Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." Journal of Democracy 1(1): 51-69.
- Gary W. Cox, The Efficient Secret. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, ch. 6.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Matthew S. Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." Comparative Politics 29(4): 449-71.

Recommended Reading:

- David J. Samuels and Matthew S. Shugart, Presidents, Parties and Prime Ministers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010,
- Kaare Strom, Wolfgang C. Muller, and Daniel Markham Smith, "Parliamentary Control of Coalition Governments," Annual Review of Political Science 13 (2010): 517-35.
- Jose Cheibub, Adam Przeworski, and Sebastian Saiegh, "Government Coalitions and Legislative Success Under Presidentialism and Parliamentarism," British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 34: 565-587

Week 6 (Feb. 15) - Degrees of Administrative Centralization

Required Reading:

- Arend Lijphart. Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Chapters 10 and 16.
- Daniel Treisman, After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999. Chs. 3, 4 and 7.

- Philip G. Roeder and Donald Rothchild, eds. Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005, chs. 2-3.
- The Federalist Papers: 6, 9, 10, 46.

Recommended Reading:

- Arend Lijphart, Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Unraveling the Central State, but how? Types of Multi-level Governance," American Political Science Review, 97(2), May 2003: 233- 243.
- William H. Riker, Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance. Boston: Little, Brown, 1964.
- Erik Wibbels, "Federalism and the Politics of Macroeconomic Policy and Performance," American Journal of Political Science 44(4), October 2000: 687-702.

Week 7 - (Feb. 20?) Party Organization and Party Systems

Required Reading:

- John Carey and Matthew Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote." Electoral Studies 14(4): 417-39.
- Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Politics." Comparative Political Studies 33, 6/7 (2000).
- Wolfgang C. Muller and Kaare Strom, eds., Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, ch. 1.
- Rovny, Jay. 2014. Communism, Federalism, and Ethnic Minorities: Explaining Party Competition Patterns in Eastern Europe. World Politics.
- Lupu, Noam. 2014. Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America. World Politics.

Recommended Reading:

- Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson. eds., Patrons, Clients, and Politics: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, ch. 1
- Stein Rokkan, State Formation, Nation-Building and Mass Politics in Europe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- J. Mark Ramseyer and Frances M. Rosenbluth, Japan's Political Marketplace. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Week 8 - (March 1) Democracy or Autocracy

Required Reading:

- Moore Jr., B. 1966. Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Boston: Beacon Press: Chapters 7-9
- Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, chs. 1-3.
- Mancur Olson, "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development," American Political Science Review 87: 567-76.
- Przeworski, A. Democracy and the Market: Chapters 1 and 2

Recommended Reading:

- Samuel P. Huntington. The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- Mancur Olson, Power and Prosperity. New York: Basic Books, 2000.
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, The Logic of Political Survival. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.
- Bratton, M. and Nicolas van de Walle. 1997. Democratic Experiments in Africa. Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hirschman, A. 1978. "Exit, Voice, and the State." World Politics 31(1): 90-107.

Week 9 - (March 8) Types of Autocracy

Required Reading:

- Geddes, Barbara. 1999. What do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years. Annual Review of Political Science 2: 115-144.
- O'Donnell, G. 1973. Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism. Berkeley: University of California Berkeley: Chapter 2
- Gandhi, Jennifer 2008, Political Institutions Under Dictatorship. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 and 3
- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico. New York: Cambridge University Press: Introduction and Chapter 1
- Blaydes, Lisa. 2011. Elections and Distributive Politics in MubarakâĂŹs Egypt. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 5.

Recommended Reading:

- Milan Svolik. 2012. The Politics of Authoritarian Rule. Cambridge University Press.
- Lust-Okar, Ellen. 2005. Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Chapters 2-3

- Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. Competitive Authoritarianism. 2010
- Luebbert, G.M. 1987. "Social Foundations of Political Order in Interwar Europe." World Politics.
- Olson, M. 2000. Power and Prosperity New York: Basic Books: Chapters 1-4
- Wintrobe, Ronald. 1998. The Political Economy of Dictatorship. Cambridge University Press.

Week 10 - (March 22) Poverty and Problems of Economic Development

Required Reading:

- Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson. 2001. "The Colonial origins of comparative development: an empirical investigation." American Economic Review 91.
- Sachs, Jeffrey and Warner, Andrew. 1997. "Fundamental Sources of Long-Run Growth." American Economic Review 87(2): 184-88.
- William Easterly. The Elusive Quest for Growth. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002. Chps. 8-13.

Recommended Reading:

- Boix, C. Democracy and Redistribution (Cambridge) Introduction, Chs 1-2
- Robert H. Bates. Markets and States in Tropical Africa. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Abhijit Banerjee and Lakshmi Iyer, "History, Institutions, and Economic Performance: The Legacy of Colonial Land Tenure Systems in India," American Economic Review, 94: 1190-1212.
- Weyland, K. 2002. The Politics of Market Reform in Fragile Democracies. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 11 - (March 29) Corruption and Natural Resource Politics

Required Reading:

- Keefer, Philip, and Stuti Khemani. 2004. "Why Do the Poor Receive Poor Services?" Economic and Political Weekly 39(9): 935-43.
- Michael L. Ross, 2001. Does Oil Hinder Democracy?, World Politics 53 (April 2001), 325-61
- Dunning, Thad. 2008. Crude Democracy: Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes, Cambridge University Press. Chs. 4 - 5.
- Van de Walle, Nicolas. 2007. "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss? The evolution of political clientelism in Africa." In Patrons, Clients, and Politics: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition, edited by Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Susan Stokes, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno and Valeria Brusco. Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism. Cambridge University Press. 2013. Chs. 3 and 8.

Recommended Reading:

- Susan Rose-Ackerman, Corruption and Government. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Putnam, R. 1993. Making Democracy Work. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Margaret Levi, Of Rule and Revenue. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

Week 12 - (April 5) Identity Politics

Required Reading:

- Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. "What Is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?" Annual Review of Political Science 9(1): 397-424.
- Varshney, A. 2003. Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India. New Haven: Yale University Press: Chapters 1-2.
- Laitin, D. 1998. Identity in Formation. Cornell: Cornell University Press. Part I.
- Posner, Daniel. 2004. The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi. American Political Science Review, 98(4): 529-545.
- Chandra, Kanchan. 2004. Why Ethnic Parties Succeed. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 - 3.

Recommended Reading:

- Anderson, B. 1983. Imagined Communities. New York: Verso: Chapters 1-3.
- Posner, Daniel. 2005. Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chapters 2-5
- Houle, Christian. 2015. Ethnic Inequality and the Dismantling of Democracy: A Global Analysis. World Politics.
- Alberto Alesina, Reza Baqir and William Easterly. 1999. "Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions," The Quarterly Journal of Economics 114(4): 1243-1284 (skip the game theory parts).
- Chwe, M. Rational Ritual: Chapters 1 and 2
- Weber, E. Peasants into Frenchmen: Chapters 6, 27, 29
- McCauley, John. 2014. The Political Mobilization of Ethnic and Religious Identities in Africa. American Political Science Review.
- Jha, Sumitra. 2013. Trade, Institutions, and Ethnic Tolerance: Evidence from South Asia. American Political Science Review.
- Wilkinson, Steven. 2004. Votes and Violence Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitschelt, H. The Radical Right in Western Europe. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press

Week 13 - (April 12) Social Movements and Revolutions

Required Reading:

- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chapters 1-3
- Lohmann, Susanne. 1994. "Dynamics of informational cascades: the monday demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989-1991." World Politics 47: 42-101.
- Kuran, Timur (1991). "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." World Politics 44: 7-48.
- Steinert-Threlkeld, Zachary. 2016. Spontaneous Collective Action: Peripheral Mobilization During the Arab Spring. American Political Science Review
- Idean Salehyan and Brandon Stewart. 2016. Political Mobilization and Government Targeting: When Do Dissidents Challenge the State? Comparative Political Studies
- Brancati, Dawn. 2014. Pocketbook Protests: Explaining the Emergence of Pro-Democracy Protests Worldwide. Comparative Political Studies

Recommended Reading:

- McAdam, D. Sidney G. Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. Dynamics of Contention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chapters 1 and 4
- Hollyer, James R., Rosendorff, B. Peter and James Vreeland. 2015. Transparency, Protest, and Autocratic Instability. American Political Science Review.
- Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice and Loyalty. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970
- Scott, James. 1985. Weapons of the Weak. Yale University Press: Chapter 8
- Rasler, Karen. "Concessions, repression, and political protest in the Iranian revolution." American Sociological Review (1996): 132-152.

Week 14 - (April 19) Conflict: Coups, Civil Wars and Terrorism

Required Reading:

- Horowitz, Donald. 1985. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press: Part I
- Crenshaw, Martha, "The Causes of Terrorism," Comparative Politics 13, no. 4 (1981): 379-389.
- Gurr, Ted. 1971. Why Men Rebel? Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch. 2.
- Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," Oxford Economic Papers 56 (4): 563-595.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War" American Political Science Review: 475-90.

- Quinlivan, James T. (1999) Coup-Proofing: Its Practices and Consequences in the Middle East. International Security 24(2):131-165.
- McMahon, R. Blake and Branislav Slantchev. 2015. The Guardianship Dilemma: Regime Security through and from the Armed Forces. American Political Science Review.
- Tezcur, Gunes Murat. 2016. Ordinary People, Extraordinary Risks: Participation in an Ethnic Rebellion. American Political Science Review

Recommended Reading:

- Finkel, Evgeny. 2015. The Phoenix Effect of State Repression: Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust. American Political Science Review.
- Fariss, Christopher. 2014. Respect for Human Rights has Improved Over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability. American Political Science Review.
- Feaver, Peter D. (2005) Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Belkin, Aaron, and Evan Schofer. 2003. "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk." Journal of Conflict Resolution 47(5):594-620.
- Humphreys, M. and Jeremy Weinstein. 2008. "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War." AJPS.
- Petersen, Roger D. Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe. Cambridge University Press
- Huntington, Samuel. 1968. Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven: Yale University Press: Chapters 1, 4-5
- Weinstein, J. Inside Rebellion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 1
- Thomas, Jakana and Kanisha D. Bond. 2015. Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations. American Political Science Review.
- Eli Berman, Michael Callen, Joseph H. Felter and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2011. "Do Working Men Rebel? Insurgency and Unemployment in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines" Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 55, No. 4. pp. 496-528.
- Graeme Blair, C Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra, Jacob N Shapiro. 2013. "Poverty and support for militant politics: Evidence from Pakistan" American Journal of Political Science. Vol. 57, no. 1. pp. 30-48.
- James D. Fearon, "Primary Commodity Exports and Civil War," Journal of Conflict Resolution 49, no. 4 (August 2005): 483-507.
- Dancygier, R. 2010. Immigration and Conflict in Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

RESEARCH PAPER DUE TUESDAY, MAY 2 @ 12:00P THROUGH WEBCOURSES

Questions to answer while reading an academic article or book (maybe in this order)[1]

- What is the point of the article?
- What is the author's agenda?
- Is the author trying to explain something? What is it?
- What have other people said about the subject the author is trying to explain?
- Does the author contribute anything beyond what these other people have said?
- What broader research agenda is the author adding to?
- What broader research agenda is the author trying to get rid of?
- What is the author's argument to explain this outcome?
- What claims does the author use to bridge his/her explanation of the outcome with the outcome itself?
- What assumptions does the author make in making these claims?
- How does the author test the claims that he/she made?
- Is this the best possible way to test these claims? Why or why not?
- Does the author test the theory in the appropriate place/time?
- Does the author's test adequately take alternative explanations into account?
- Does the author's test adequately account for biases, such as endogeneity, selection or ecological inference?
- What are the author's findings?
- Are the findings generalizable to other cases?
- How do the findings affect our understanding of the author's research agenda? Other research agendas?
- Has the author convinced you that his/her explanation for the chosen outcome is better than what others have done?

[1] It's also good practice to do this with your own work.