

SPE 354: Comparative Public Policy
Spring 2023
Professor Tanu Kumar
Tuesdays 10 AM- 11:50 AM

Following the wave of decentralization that occurred in the late 20th century, the implementation of policies related to water, sanitation, transportation, housing, pollution, energy, and public safety typically falls to state or local governments. Yet these sub-national institutions face difficulties as they tackle these challenges because development tends to spill over political boundaries and resources are limited. Such difficulties are particularly acute in the developing world due to tighter resource constraints, weak institutions, and the comparative severity of the underlying problems. This course will consider the political and institutional environment in which efforts to address problems with local-level policy implementation are developed. Emphasis will be placed upon fertile areas for research within the social sciences. Topics will include decentralization and multi-level governance, the police, civil society and popular mobilization, public policy formulation, front-line bureaucracies, corruption, local political economy. Readings will be drawn primarily from Political Science, Economics, and Public Policy. Empirical examples will be drawn from across the developing world.

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Understand the role of subnational and local governments in policymaking and policy implementation in developing countries
2. Characterize the incentives and constraints of important actors at the subnational and local level
3. Identify major causes of variation in policy outcomes at the subnational and local level
4. Apply this knowledge to identify open questions and debates in both research and policy

This coursework is appropriate for Ph.D. and M.A. students in the Department of Politics and Economics.

Important dates

8/29 Sign-ups for project pitches due
9/19 Paper topic due
10/3 Midterm, no class
11/21 Thanksgiving, no class
12/5 Presentations, virtual
12/12 Final paper due

Assignments

Readings and discussion

Every week, there will be anywhere between 2 and 4 required readings. It is expected that you complete these readings before the start of class. If you are running out of time, the paper introduction almost always provides a comprehensive summary. Beyond this, I encourage you to spend time with the theory and research design sections; all of the papers are innovative in one or both. Some weeks also have optional readings that you may find interesting or useful; these are not required.

Note that with the exception of book chapters and unpublished/forthcoming papers (which are on Canvas) you will need to find the assigned articles yourself online. Looking up the readings on Google Scholar or The Claremont Colleges library catalog will provide you with valuable research skills. Reach out to me if you are having trouble finding the readings. You can begin searching for articles at <https://library.claremont.edu>.

Participation in discussion is fundamental to this seminar-style class. I expect you to come prepared to answer discussion questions and pose several of your own.

Reading questions

Every class, you must submit **at least one** question for **every required reading** through Canvas. These questions may be big or small. They can be about something you didn't understand, a critique, or a research question.

Midterm

There will be no class during the October 3rd week of class. The week will be devoted to a midterm policy memo that will help consolidate your knowledge from the first half of the class.

You will be asked to write a 5-page double spaced memo that focuses on decentralization and policy in one country. The memo will describe the responsibilities and power given to subnational or local units in your country of interest and describe **two** policy areas of focus. The memo will then outline potential data sources for outcomes related to these policy areas at the subnational or local level. I will provide more detailed information prior to the assignment.

You may work in groups of up to **two** on the midterm. Each group midterm should include a short attestation on each author's contribution. Country selections are due 9/19.

Policy memo (final projects)

The final assignment for this class will be 10-page double spaced policy memo that builds upon your midterm project. Final papers should include

- A country focus
- A description of an important policy area in the country of focus
- Data on subnational or local variation in outcomes related to the policy area of focus
- An explanation of potential reasons for this policy variation based on the ideas discussed in class along with your own literature review

As with the midterm, you may work in groups of up to **two**.

Paper topics are due on 9/19.

Individual project pitches

In the second half of class, you will begin sharing your final paper projects to collect feedback and ideas.

Please sign up for a slot to share your project here: <https://shorturl.at/isK45>

On the day that it is your turn, you will share a brief one-page memo on a Canvas discussion board. This memo should include your country focus, a description of the policy area in which you are interested, and one hypothesis about what might cause variation in the policy area in which you are interested.

The rest of the class will have the responsibility of providing feedback on the hypothesis, suggestions for data sources, and other reactions. All students must provide at least one paragraph (5 sentences) in response. You must respond to each pitch.

Please be courteous and constructive. Think about how to make the project better, rather than a statement on why you don't like it. It is also helpful and important to highlight what you do like about the project.

Bottom line: be generous in your interpretation of ideas, colleagues, and issues. Always aim to see the best version of them and help them.

Final presentation

The last class session will be devoted to workshopping your research ideas. Each student/group will be responsible for a ten minute presentation of where they are in the project. There will be five minutes for feedback and questions from the group.

Grading Plan

| <i>Class Element</i> | <i>Weight</i> |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Participation | 20% |
| Weekly questions | 10% |
| Project Pitches | 10% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Presentation | 20% |
| Final paper | 20% |

Class schedule and readings

| | Date | Topic | Readings | Asynchronous |
|---|------|---------------|--|---|
| 1 | 8/29 | Introductions | <p>"Puzzling Disparities at the Margins of the City" Chapter 1, Auerbach, Adam Michael. "<i>Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Goods Provision in India's Urban Slums</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019</p> <p>"Policies, Politics" Chapter 10, Banerjee, Abhijit V., and Esther Duflo. <i>Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty</i>. Public Affairs, 2011</p> | <p>Attend at least one panel of this conference if possible:</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf08hyaTx_AdfuA29XolrjXA_PkXzSig_g-JHtfmsmsOE7ekP6w/viewform</p> |

| Part 1: What does local government look like? | | | | |
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| 1 | 9/5 | Why focus on the subnational? | <p>Snyder, Richard. (2001). "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." <i>Studies in Comparative International Development</i>. 36(1): 93-110.</p> <p>Kyle, Jordan and Danielle Resnick. 2019. "Delivering More with Less: Subnational Service Provision in Low- Capacity States." <i>Studies in Comparative International Development</i>.</p> <p>Soifer, H. D. (2019). Units of analysis in subnational research. <i>Inside countries: Subnational research in comparative politics</i>. Cambridge University Press, 2019.</p> | Meet with me |
| 2 | 9/12 | Decentralization | <p>Falleti, T.G., (2005). "A sequential theory of decentralization: Latin American cases in comparative perspective." <i>American Political Science Review</i>.</p> <p>Carlitz, R. D. (2017). "Money flows, water trickles: Understanding patterns of decentralized water provision in Tanzania." <i>World Development</i>.</p> <p>Johnson, Craig, Priya Deshingkar, and Daniel Start. (2005). "Grounding the State: Devolution and Development in India's Panchayats," <i>Journal of Development Studies</i>.</p> | This discussion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K38Vk0dSNIU |
| 4 | 9/19 | Urbanization | <p>Post, A. E. (2018). Cities and politics in the developing world. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>.</p> <p>"Two Cities" Chapter 1, Jacob, B., & Jacob, S. (2022). <i>Governing Locally: Institutions, Policies and Implementation in Indian Cities</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Kumar, T., & Stenberg, M. (2022). Why Political Scientists Should Study Smaller Cities. <i>Urban Affairs Review</i>.</p> | Country selection and description due on Canvas |
| 5 | 9/26 | Local control | <p>Gibson, Edward L. (2005). "Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries." <i>World Politics</i>. 58(1): 101-132.</p> <p>Sidel, John (2004). "Bossism and Democracy in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia: Towards an Alternative Framework for the</p> | This podcast: https://www.stitcher.com/show/the-ezra-klein-show-2/episode/theres-been-a-massive-change-in-where-american-policy- |

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|---|-------|------------------------------|--|--|
| | | | <p>Study of "Local Strongmen." From Harriss, John and Stokke, Kristin and Tornquist, Olle, (eds.) <i>Politicising Democracy: the New Local Politics of Democratisation</i>. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK.</p> <p>Dasgupta, A., & Beard, V. A. (2007). "Community driven development, collective action and elite capture in Indonesia." <i>Development and change</i>, 38(2), 229-249.</p> | gets-made-209497524 |
| 6 | 10/3 | Midterm assignment, no class | | |
| Part 2: What leads to variation in policy implementation at the local level? | | | | |
| 7 | 10/10 | Politics | <p>Jensenius, F. R., & Chhibber, P. (2023). "Privileging one's own? Voting patterns and politicized spending in India." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>.</p> <p>Niedzwiecki, S. (2016). "Social policies, attribution of responsibility, and political alignments: A subnational analysis of Argentina and Brazil." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>.</p> <p>Bueno, N. S. (2021). "The timing of public policies: Political budget cycles and credit claiming." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>.</p> | Project pitch |
| 8 | 10/17 | Bureaucrats | <p>Raffler, P. J. (2022). "Does political oversight of the bureaucracy increase accountability? Field experimental evidence from a dominant party regime." <i>American Political Science Review</i>.</p> <p>Gulzar, S., & Pasquale, B. J. (2017). "Politicians, bureaucrats, and development: Evidence from India." <i>American Political Science Review</i>.</p> <p>Rich, J. A. (2022). "Outsourcing Bureaucracy to Evade Accountability: How Public Servants Build Shadow State Capacity." <i>American Political Science Review</i>.</p> | <p>Either:</p> <p>Attend at least one panel of this virtual conference: https://www.globalsouthurbanpols.com</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Listen to this podcast: https://www.scopconditionspodcasts.com/episodes/episode-22-why-empires-declared-a-war-on-drugs-with-diana-kim</p> |
| 9 | 10/24 | Collective action | "Introduction." Olson, Mancur. (1965). <i>The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and</i> | Project pitch |

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| | | | <p><i>the Theory of Groups</i>. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.</p> <p>Slough, T., Rubenson, D., Levy, R. E., Alpizar Rodriguez, F., Bernedo del Carpio, M., Buntaine, M. T., ... & Zhang, B. (2021). "Adoption of community monitoring improves common pool resource management across contexts." <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>.</p> <p>Dell, M., Lane, N., & Querubin, P. (2018). "The historical state, local collective action, and economic development in Vietnam." <i>Econometrica</i>.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Diaz-Cayeros, Alberto, Beatriz Magaloni, and Alexander Ruiz-Euler. (2014). "Traditional Governance, Citizen Engagement, and Local Public Goods: Evidence from Mexico." <i>World Development</i>.</p> | |
| 10 | 10/31 | Political Mediation | <p>Pages 3-23 only. Stokes, S. C., Dunning, T., & Nazareno, M. (2013). <i>Brokers, voters, and clientelism: The puzzle of distributive politics</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Jha, S., Rao, V., & Woolcock, M. (2007). "Governance in the gullies: democratic responsiveness and leadership in Delhi's slums." <i>World Development</i>.</p> <p>Tsai, Lilly. 2007. "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 101(2): 355-72.</p> | Project pitch |
| 11 | 11/7 | Participatory Institutions | <p>Wampler, B. (2007). "Can participatory institutions promote pluralism? Mobilizing low-income citizens in Brazil." <i>Studies in Comparative International Development</i>.</p> <p>Bjorkman, Martina and Jakob Svensson. (2009). "Power to the People: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment of a Community Based Monitoring Project in Uganda." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i>.</p> <p>Cooperman, Alicia Dailey. "Bloc Voting for Electoral Accountability." Working Paper.</p> | Project pitch |

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| 12 | 11/14 | Technology | Hyun, C., Kumar, T., Post, A. E., & Ray, I. (2022). Engineering Predictable Water Supply: The Humans Behind the Tech. In <i>Introduction to Development Engineering: A Framework with Applications from the Field</i> (pp. 463-485). Cham: Springer International Publishing. Lewis-Faupel, S., Neggers, Y., Olken, B. A., & Pande, R. (2016). Can electronic procurement improve infrastructure provision? Evidence from public works in India and Indonesia. <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i> . Grossman, G., Platas, M. R., & Rodden, J. (2018). "Crowdsourcing accountability: ICT for service delivery." <i>World Development</i> . | Project pitch |
| 13 | 11/21 | Thanksgiving, no class | | |
| 14 | 11/28 | NREGA Case study | Pages 1-29, 61-91 only in Jenkins, R. and Manor, James (2017). <i>Politics and the Right to Work: India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act</i> . Oxford University Press. | Project pitch |
| 15 | 12/5 | | Presentations, virtual (2:50 class) | |
| | 12/12 | | Final paper due | |

Expectations and Logistics

Please read the items on the schedule prior to class. Your participation is essential to a successful experience for all.

Please submit assignments through Canvas. Assignments submitted in any other way will not be graded.

Late assignments will typically incur a half grade letter penalty per day unless you have a reasonable excuse.

You can expect feedback on your assignments in 14 days.

University Resources for Students

Access to university resources and policies can be found in Canvas using the left navigation menu.

Final Grades

Your grade will be calculated using the following scale. Grades with plus or minus designations are at the professor's discretion.

| <i>Letter Grade</i> | <i>Grade Point</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Learning Outcome</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
| A | 4.0 | Complete mastery of course material and additional insight beyond course material | Insightful |
| B | 3.0 | Complete mastery of course material | Proficient |
| C | 2.0 | Gaps in mastery of course material; not at level expected by the program | Developing |
| U | 0.0 | Unsatisfactory | Ineffective |

In exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness) that prevent a student from completing assigned coursework, and provided that the student's work to date is satisfactory, the instructor may assign an I (Incomplete) grade along with a date for successful submission of course assignments and requirements.

Continual matriculation at CGU requires a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 in all coursework taken at CGU. Students may not have more than two incompletes at one time.

CGU policies on grades, including incomplete grades, registration and enrollment can be found on the Registrar's webpage: <http://www.cgu.edu/registrar>.