SEMinar on historical-comparative sociology, 15 weeks
(on offer at ICS-UL since 2008)

Course Description & Objectives
This course provides an overview of important themes, debates, and agendas in historical-comparative sociology. One objective is to help students understand, appreciate, and critique important works in this area. Readings will include both classical contributions to historical sociology and works pertaining specifically to problems of methodology and theory. In addition, by providing a forum to discuss important theoretical and methodological issues in the field and by pushing students to grapple with these issues relative to their own research projects, this seminar aims at helping post-graduate students develop the skills necessary to become critical, informed researchers.

Course Requirements and Evaluation
Grading for the course will be based on the following:

Participation (20%): Participation in this class is crucial. You will be paired with at least one other student on the first day of class, and will be assigned responsibility for leading discussion for a particular class session(s). All students are expected to be prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings. The overall participation grade will be based on attendance, your leadership of discussion on a particular day, and your contribution to classroom discussion throughout the entire semester (including those days when you are not presenting).

Book Review (20%): Reviews will be submitted during weeks 5 – 10 of the semester (students will select a date on the first day of class). This gives students a chance to read and review an exemplary work in historical-comparative sociology, intellectual history, or social and political theory. Students may draw from any of the supplemental readings on this syllabus, from an annotated bibliography such as that found in Theda Skocpol’s Visions and Method in Historical Sociology (available at the ICS library), or any suitable work that clear with me first. Book reviews include both a summary of a book’s argument and a discussion of the book’s contributions and shortcomings. See reviews in the
Análise Social or the American Journal of Sociology for useful examples. Book review should be about 800-1000 words in length and double-spaced. Students are expected to give a short oral presentation (about 5 minutes) on the book on the day that they submit their review.

**Preliminary Literature Review/Project Proposal (20%)**: This is due at week 6 and requires students to specify the focus of their course paper/proposal and provide a relatively well-organized and developed literature review relative to that question. More specific instructions will be provided in the first few weeks of class.

**Final Paper/Paper Proposal (40%)**: This will be the end result of the semester, and will reflect either a completed paper with analyses and a conclusion or a well-developed research proposal. It is due in class on early December and students are required to give a short presentation summarizing their work (similar to a conference presentation, about 15 minutes in length). This is partially a revision of their prior work and should include a clear presentation of a topic/outcome, relevant literature review, clear conceptual/theoretical discussion, the methodology to be employed and why it is suitable, and then the analyses and conclusions. In the case of a proposal, and in lieu of analyses and conclusions, I expect a sound research plan, including clear discussion of the data that will be used, its location and quality, perhaps some cursory examination of the data, and what will be gained from this proposed analysis.
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1:  **Course Organization and Introduction**

**Sumário das aulas:** A escolha do desenho de pesquisa, das metodologias a empregar, a própria selecção do tema de investigação não é independente da história da disciplina em que trabalham. Este é um exercício que, em princípio, pode ser feito para qualquer ciência social. Nestas aulas, fá-lo-emos para a ciência política e, em parte, para a sociologia. O outro ponto a discutir, na segunda metade das aulas, é o das implicações deste tipo de exercício. A ideia aqui é tornar-vos mais sensíveis ao carácter contingente do trabalho científico: uma vez que aquilo que estudamos e como o fazemos não é fruto de um qualquer processo natural de evolução da ciência, devemos incorporar no nosso próprio trabalho uma certa reflexividade do percurso sócio-histórico que nos trouxe até aqui. Tal distância crítica face aos nossos instrumentos (conceitos, métodos, agendas) é algo inestimável em si mesmo. Poderá ter igualmente um valor heurístico muito significativo. Em suma, o objectivo destas aulas, para além de vos introduzir a um conjunto de conceitos (teoria, hipóteses, variável, etc.), é o de vos tornar mais conscientes de que, quando optarem por uma determinada metodologia de pesquisa, têm de arranjar uma melhor justificação para o fazer do que o mero “porque é assim que se faz”.

Week 2:  **Mannheim and the historicity of social sciences. The case of political science.**

**Required reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**


**Week 3:** From the state of the discipline to the return of the state. The behaviorist revolution of the 1950s and the neo-institutionalism of the 1980s.

**Required reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**


**Week 4:** The debate on “methodological nationalism” and the epistemological challenges posed by globalization. Challenges to research design in political science today.

Required reading:

Supplemental reading:

**Week 5:** Time is of the Essence: Sociology, History, and the Place of Theory

Required reading:
Somers, Margaret R. “‘We’re No Angels’: Realism, Rational Choice, and Relationality in Social Science,” American Journal of Sociology 104: 3 (November 1998), pp. 722-784.
Mahoney, James, “Revisiting General Theory in Historical Sociology,” Social Forces (December 2004).

Supplemental reading (more from the 1998 AJS symposium on historical sociology):

**Week 6: Carlo Ginzburg: Much more than a micro-historian**

Required reading:

Supplemental reading:

**Week 7:**  
*S.N. Eisenstadt: Civilizational comparative analysis, or, why to take a bird's eye view of the world*

Required reading:

**Week 8:**  
*Case Studies and the Small-N problem*

Required reading:
Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (part 2)

Supplemental reading:

**Week 9: *Time, Sequence & Path Dependence in Historical Sociology***

**Required Reading:**

**Supplemental Reading:**

**Week 10: *Quantitative Approaches in Historical Sociology***

**Required reading:**

Supplemental reading:

**Week 11: Quantitative Approaches Continued/Large Data Collection Projects**

Required reading:

Supplemental reading:

**Week 12: Doing Archival Research & the Use of Historical Sources in Sociology**


**Week 13:  Reading Day**
Individual Meetings on Research Projects

**Week 14:  Archival Research Continued/ Strategies and Agendas in Historical Sociology**

**Week 15:  Research Presentations**