COMPARATIVE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
Political Science 4063
Summer Interession 2012

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213 Stubbs Hall
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Daily 9:00-12:30
112 Audubon Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is dedicated to the comparative analysis of political institutions, which in comparative politics are viewed as either formal rules or organizations. The primary orientation of the course material lies in state governmental institutions, although some social institutions will also be examined. The course focuses on what has come to be called the "new institutionalism," which adopts a more decidedly structural or state-centric approach to politics. It emphasizes the relative autonomy of political institutions, and thus seeks to present a counterweight to the predominant view of politics as merely a reflection of the aggregation of individual behavior. If it can be argued that individuals and institutions impact each other, the new institutionalism focuses primary attention on how relatively autonomous political institutions (i.e., rules and organizations) affect individual political behavior and impact the performance of the political system.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

First, each student is expected to attend each and every class session. Second, it is imperative that students keep pace with the reading assignments. Come to class having already read the assigned materials for that day. Third, each student must sit for two examinations. The first examination is scheduled for our session on Saturday, August 4. The second examination is set for the intercession final examination day on Saturday, August 11. The examinations are non-cumulative, short-answer and essay in structure, and are each weighted at 40 percent of the course grade. Finally, each student is required to write a short (6 double-spaced typed pages) essay on one of the themes listed at the end of this syllabus. This essay is weighted at the remaining 20 percent of the course grade and is due no later than Friday, August 10.

READINGS

Given the truncated schedule of the intersession, the readings for the course are comprised of selected articles, book chapters, and essays. All readings will be available for download on the course Moodle site. See the syllabus of topics and readings below for details.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPICS AND SYLLABUS OF READINGS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon July 30</td>
<td><strong>ON INSTITUTIONS AND INSTITUTIONALISM</strong></td>
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<td>Tue July 31</td>
<td><strong>THE STATE</strong></td>
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<td>Wed August 1</td>
<td><strong>CONSTITUTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL ENGINEERING</strong></td>
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<td>Thurs August 2</td>
<td><strong>PRESIDENTIALISM</strong></td>
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Fri August 3  PARLIAMENTARISM


Sat August 4  EXAM 1

Mon August 6  SEMI-PRESIDENTIALISM


Tue August 7  ELECTORAL LAWS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES


Wed August 8  POLITICAL PARTIES


Thur August 9  VERTICAL POWER


Fri August 10  CAVEATS


Sat August 11  EXAM 2
ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Each student must write a short essay that addresses one of the themes below. The essay is to be approximately six (6) double-spaced typed pages (not counting the cover page or bibliography), using an 11- or 12-point font and with normal margins. Use of outside materials (beyond your assigned readings) is expected and all materials used in the preparation of the paper must be cited. Citations must include the author, title, source, and page number where the information was found. Pick one of the following topics and your arguments in response must be institutional in nature. The paper may be submitted electronically via e-mail to the instructor. It is due on or before the final class session of the course, Friday August 10.

(1) Is British Devolution federalism?
(2) Is India (or Canada) really an exception to Duverger's Law?
(3) Why have there been no long-term major third parties in US political history?
(4) Why do most political scientists prefer parliamentarism over presidentialism?
(5) When is the head of state important in German politics?
(6) Who is more important in France: the president or the prime minister?
(7) Why has the US never held a national referendum?
(8) What would happen if Britain adopted PR for general elections to the House of Commons?
(9) Did Charles de Gaulle play fair with the French Constitution?
(10) Did Russia's Boris Yeltsin act unconstitutionally in the 1998 Kirienko nomination affair?
(11) What likely will happen to the British House of Lords?
(12) Why does the current French constitution prohibit MPs from serving on the cabinet?
(13) What are the strengths and weakness of coalition governments?
(14) Would Al Gore have been elected president in 2000 if the US had a popular vote-based system?
(15) Is the British Prime Minister becoming increasingly "presidential"?
(16) Why have Italian governments had such short life spans?
(17) Is France's constitutional council a "third house" of the French legislature?
(18) Are political parties more important inside of government or outside of government?
(19) Why do federalism, bicameralism, and judicial review all tend to go together?
(20) Why has the Weimar constitution of interwar Germany become a metaphor for the present?