CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the major ideas underpinning the comparative analysis of political institutions, which in comparative politics are viewed as either formal rules or organizations, and to current theories regarding the impact of institutional variation. 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.

As theories of new institutionalism took hold in American politics, comparative scholars began to explore the causes and consequences of the wide variety of rules and norms governing democracies around the world. This gave rise to an array of questions such as: How do democracy and non-democratic regimes differ? Why do democracies emerge and break down? How do presidential and parliamentary systems differ and what are the consequences of these differences? How do electoral rules shape party systems and the nature of political representation? How do political institutions affect policy outputs and policy outcomes? Where do institutions come from in the first place? Comparative scholars have created a vast literature that answers these and many other questions about political institutions. The subject area of comparative political institutions is enormous, and we will not be able to cover all aspects of it. Instead, I have selected topics that are of key importance to provide you with sufficient background for future research in this area, including your own research papers for this course.

The course begins with an introduction to institutionalism, “the State” and a discussion of the emergence of state institutions. We then examine civil society, constitutions and constitutional constraints on state power. The bulk of the course consists of a comparative study of the key institutions of the modern state (executive, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy). This analysis will be set in three different contexts: one defined by the type of political regime (democratic vs. non-democratic) within which state institutions function; the second differentiating among different kinds of democratic systems (presidential, parliamentary, or mixed/semi-presidential); and the third deriving from the choice of electoral system and the
nature of political parties. We will close with an examination of the impact of institutional choice on economic performance and explore new research on institutional endogeneity: namely, where institutions come from and how they change over time.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

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: a mid-term exam and a final exam. The mid-term exam is scheduled for Thursday, October 11th. The mid-term exam will be multiple choice, short answer and essay in format. The final exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 6th, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The final exam will be multiple choice, short answer, and essay in format. The final exam is not cumulative. Each exam is weighted at 30% percent of the course grade. Finally, each student is required to write a research paper. You must submit a one-paragraph summary of your topic to me by Thursday, September 27th. The final paper is due in class on Thursday, November 29th with no exceptions. The research paper is weighted at 40% of the grade.

Grading Scale: A (100-95), A- (94-90), B+ (89-86), B (85-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-76), C (75-73), C- (72-70), D+ (69-66), D (65-63), D- (62-60), F (59 and below).

Research Paper guidelines: Your research paper can be on almost any topic dealing with comparative institutions (see course description above for some major questions in the field). For example, you could focus on the downstream consequence(s) of a national or sub-national institutional variable; that is, you could adopt an institutional factor(s) as the independent variable, i.e. what is the effect of a proportional representation electoral system (independent variable) on the number of effective political parties (dependent variable) in Germany? Or you can compare and contrast an institution (judiciary, federalism, etc.) in a state with a democratic vs. non-democratic regime. Or you could examine institutional change, i.e. why suffrage is extended to particular classes of persons. The paper should focus on any country other than the USA, and may adopt any traditional form of institutional analysis. If you have any doubt about the suitability of a topic, see me before you begin.

Your paper must be 15-20 double-spaced pages in length, including notes and/or bibliography. I will grade your paper mainly on the depth and insightfulness of your analysis, though I will also take into account its organization, the quality of your sources, and your writing style. Papers should be strictly factual, not opinionated. You must use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical name/date citations (with bibliography) for any quotes and for important information or arguments taken from a particular source.

Your paper must be typed (double-spaced) and proofread. If you have trouble finding a topic or organizing your paper, see me for suggestions. For help with your writing, try the LSU Writing Center, B-18 Coates Hall, 578-4439.
READINGS

Readings for the course are comprised of selected articles, book chapters, and essays. These readings will be available for download on the course Moodle site. The following text book is recommended for the course:


ADDITIONAL NOTES

LSU Policy on class attendance is clear. “Class attendance is the responsibility of the student. The Student is expected to attend all classes. A student who finds it necessary to miss class assumes responsibility for making up examinations, obtaining lecture notes, and otherwise compensating for what may have been missed.” The midterm exam will not be rescheduled without prior approval of the instructor. Final exams cannot be rescheduled by the instructor and require the rescheduling approval of your Dean. See the LSU Policy for student absences, at http://appl003.ocs.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/4d8b193f0753c7e48625714000672ba4/D45654A11F8AC79686256C250062AE4D/$File/PS+22+revision+8+2007.pdf.

If you require disability accommodations see the LSU Disability Policy at http://appl003.ocs.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/4d8b193f0753c7e48625714000672ba4/5B3C0A0C12DF66B486256C250062AE50/$File/PS+26+R03.pdf for an explanation of the process of claiming such status.

Plagiarism, cheating or any other form of academic or non-academic misconduct will be reported immediately to the Dean of Students. See the LSU Code of Student Conduct at http://saa.lsu.edu/sites/saa.lsu.edu/files/attachments/Code%20of%20Student%20Conduct%20August%202009_0.pdf

Tape recorders and/or laptop computers are allowed in class, so long as it is understood that the recordings and notes are for your own personal use and not for public dispensation or sale.

Finally, classroom etiquette requires that students be attentive and respectful to one another. Turn your cell phones off when attending class.
DATE TOPIC AND SYLLABUS OF READINGS

AUG 21/23  ON INSTITUTIONS AND INSTITUTIONALISM


AUG 28/30  THE STATE


SEPT 4  CIVIL SOCIETY


SEPT 6/11  CONSTITUTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL ENGINEERING


SEPT 13/18  CLASSIFYING REGIMES: DEMOCRATIC VS. NON-DEMOCRATIC


SEPT 20/25  VERTICAL POWER: FEDERALISM AND DECENTRALIZATION


SEPT 27/OCT 2  PRESIDENTIALISM


Sept 27 – One Page Summary of Research Paper Due

OCT 4/9  PARLIAMENTARISM


**OCTOBER 11 – MIDTERM EXAM**

**OCT 16/23 SEMI-PRESIDENTIALISM**


Steven D. Roper (2002). “Are All Semipresidential Regimes the Same?,” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 34, no. 3: 253-272

**OCT 25 THE JUDICIARY**


**OCT 30 THE BUREAUCRACY**


**NOV 1/6 ELECTORAL LAWS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES**


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**NOV 8/13**

**POLITICAL PARTIES**


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**NOV 15**

**DIRECT DEMOCRACY**


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**NOV 20**

**INSTITUTIONS AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**


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**November 22 – THANKSGIVING**

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**NOV 27/29**

**ENDOGENEITY AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE**


Nov. 29 -- RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

Dec. 4: NO CLASS – FINAL EXAM WEEK

DECEMBER 6: FINAL EXAM, 5:30-7:30 pm