Introduction to Comparative Politics
Political Science 2053
Fall, 2010
Audubon 112
MWF 12:40-1:30

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Course Description

This General Education course is designed to introduce undergraduate students to the sub-field of political science known as comparative politics. Class instruction combines an overview of the various approaches of study in the field with extended discussion of the various objects of study. Students will acquire a basic familiarity with a range of tools and concepts so as to help them understand and compare the domestic political contexts of countries around the globe. Furthermore, by the semester’s end students will be able to account for the variables of political change and stability at a variety of levels, ranging from basic social structures to broader civilizational and global units, with special emphasis on the modern state.

Course Requirements

It is imperative that students attend all classes and fulfill all reading requirements asked of them. All forms of testing will rely on lectures and in-class discussions as well as on the assigned reading. Evaluation is according to the standard format: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (0-59). Grade breakdown is as follows:

1. 5 unannounced and spontaneous quizzes (25%), consisting of a short-answer question, a few multiple-choice questions, or a very brief reading and response assignment. 7 such quizzes will occur over the course of the semester so that students may drop their two lowest marks. No make-ups will be allowed.

2. Midterm Exam (20%), which will be an in-class closed book exam combining multiple choice questions, short-answer questions, and one short essay question. Students will be required to bring a scantron and a blue book of their own.

3. 1 In-Class Presentation (5%). Each student will have the opportunity to present to the class a brief analysis, in no more than five minutes, of a news article of interest on an event outside of the United States. A schedule will be established in the first week of class, as well as further discussion and instruction.

4. 5 One Page (double-spaced, 12 pt font) Writing Assignments (20%). In accordance with the themes of the class, students will write thoughtful responses to the problems and issues raised. These will be due in-class only and further instruction will be provided (see below for due dates).
5. Final Exam (30%). This will be an in-class, closed book cumulative exam combining multiple choice questions and essays. A scantron and blue book will be necessary for each student.

NB: Make-ups will only be arranged for midterm and final exams in the event of: 1) medical emergency with accompanying physician’s note; 2) participation in University-sponsored or military-affiliated events with official notification provided in advance.

*** There will be opportunity for bonus marks throughout the semester, left to the discretion of the instructor (e.g., Guest Lecture attendance; optional bonus assignments; etc.): Stay tuned!

**Required Text**


Textbook is available in the University Bookstore.

*** All additional reading materials will be posted on Moodle.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

(NB: This schedule is subject to change; you will be notified in the event)

**Part 1: The “What” and “How” of Comparative Politics, Then and Now**

1. Aug. 23 – 27:
   Introduction: What is Comparative Politics, and what does a Comparativist do?
   > Newton & Van Deth (Textbook, subsequently referred to as NVD), pp. 1-10
   > Caramani, “Introduction to Comparative Politics,” pp. 1-12

2. Aug. 30 – Sept. 1 (No class, Sept. 3):
   Theories and Approaches in Historical Context
   > Peters, “Approaches in Comparative Politics,” pp. 44-60

   Recommended:
   > Muncik, “The Past and Present of Comparative Politics”
   > Hall, “Beyond the Comparative Method,” pp. 20-23

   **Writing Assignment 1:** Due Sept. 1 (in-class)

**Part 2: The State and Regimes: Origins and Development**

3. Sept. 8 – 10 (No class, Sept. 6):
   What is, and from whence, the state, and how to understand it?
   > NVD, pp. 13-32
Weber, “What is a State?” pp. 146-150

Recommended:
Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In” pp. 150-56

4. Sept. 13 – 17:
Democracy and Democratization
NVD, pp. 34-66
Huntington, Excerpts from The Third Wave, pp. 222-28

Recommended:
Linz & Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” pp. 463-475

5. Sept. 20 – 24:
Authoritarianism and Non-Democratic Regimes
Brooker, 133-54
Snyder, pp. 1-14

**Writing Assignment 2: Due Sept. 24 (in-class)**

Part 3: The Polity: Structures and Institutions

6. Sept. 27 – Oct. 1:
Constitutions and Electoral Systems
NVD, pp. 69-89
Gallagher, “Elections and Referendums,” pp. 240-60

Recommended:
Taagepera and Shugart, "Why Study Electoral Systems?" pp. 165-175
Mcllwain, “Some Modern Definitions of Constitutionalism,” pp. 3-24

7. Oct. 4 – 8:
Presidential and Parliamentary Government; Levels of Government
NVD, pp. 91-132
The Debate over Presidentialism, Selections: Linz, Cheibub, Mainwaring & Shugart

Recommended:

**Writing Assignment 3: Due Oct. 8 (in-class)**

8. Oct. 11 – 15:
Executives, Legislatures, and Bureaucracy
NVD, pp. 134-67

Recommended:
Muller, “Governments and Bureaucracies,” pp. 189-213
Midterm Exam: Oct. 15 (in-class)

Part 4: Political Actors and Processes

9. Oct. 18 – 20:
Political Attitudes and Political Culture
  > NVD, pp. 169-97
  > Ersson and Lane, “Political Culture,” pp. 419-436

Fall Break: No classes, Oct. 21 – 24.

10. Oct. 25 – 29:
Political Attitudes and Political Culture Cont.

**Writing Assignment 4: Due Oct. 25 (in-class)

11. Nov. 1 – 5:
Pressure Groups and Social Movements
  > NVD, pp. 198-222

Recommended:

12. Nov. 8 – 12:
Political Participation: Voters and Elections
  > NVD, pp. 245-265

13. Nov. 15 – 19:
Party Systems
  > NVD, pp. 268-288

**Writing Assignment 5: Due Nov. 19 (in-class)

Part 5: Policies and Performance

14. Nov. 22:
Political Ideologies
  > NVD, pp. 291-312

Thanksgiving Holiday: No classes, Nov. 24 – 28.

15. Nov. 29 – Dec. 3:
The Modes and Effects of Decision-Making; Review
  > 315-335

Exam Week: Dec. 6 – 11: Exam Date to be Announced.