Comparative Political Systems

GOVT 040  Summer 2018 First Session

Professor Eric Langenbacher  E-mail: langenbe@georgetown.edu
Lectures: M-R 3:15-5:15  Phone: 687-5903
Office Hours: M,T 2:00-3:00 ICC 657 or by appointment

Overview

This course introduces students to the study of comparative politics. The first section looks at the general concepts and processes that characterize politics, such as the state, the nation, democracy and civil society with reference to why these phenomena developed and what functions they fulfill. The second portion delves into the specific elements and institutions of modern political systems, including the executive, parliaments, subnational and supranational governance, political parties and party systems. We also conduct several mathematical calculations to better understand political life. The final section looks at several more specialized topics in comparative politics—such as corruption, political and economic challenges in the developing world and the process of European integration. Overall, the course intends to provide students with an overview of the field of comparative politics, a deeper understanding of modern political systems and a set of skills with which countries can be analyzed.

Requirements

Midterm examination  30%
Presentation  30%
Final examination  30%
Participation  10%

The midterm covers the material from the first part of the course and consists of one over-arching essay question. The final examination covers the material from the second and third portions of the course and consists of several calculations and a long essay question. For the presentation (10 minutes), students choose a country and apply the concepts and formulas learned in class to describe and analyze it. All deadlines are found in the course schedule and are not negotiable.

Attendance to both the lectures and discussion sections is mandatory and students are expected to come fully prepared for class, completing all assigned readings beforehand.

*** Students must abide by the code of academic conduct as outlined in the Georgetown Honor System ***

Texts
The following required texts are for sale at the bookstore:


Copies of these texts and all other readings will also be on reserve at Lauinger Library in both electronic and paper formats. Students are also urged to follow current domestic and international events in *The New York Times, The Washington Post* and *The Economist*.

**Course Schedule**

**Part I: Concepts and Themes in Comparative Politics**

1. June 4  **Introduction to Comparative Politics**  
   O’Neil Ch. 1.  
   **The State**  
   O’Neil, Ch 2.  
   Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”

2. June 5  **The Nation and Nationalism**  
   O’Neil, Ch. 3, pp. 56-68;  

3. June 6  **Regime Types**  
   O’Neil, Ch. 6.  
   Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Modern Non-democratic Regimes”

4. June 7  **Democracy**  
   O’Neil, Ch. 5.  
   **Civil Society**  

5. June 11  **Political Cleavages and Parties**  
   Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems”

**Modernization and Postmodernization**

6. June 12  **Summary/Discussion**

7. June 13  **MIDTERM**

8. June 14  **The Executive**
Lijphart: Ch. 7
Linz and Horowitz, “Presidential v. Parliamentary Democracy: A Debate”

**Parliaments**
Lijphart: Ch 11

**Part II: Institutions and Elements of Democratic Systems**

9. June 18  **Subnational Governance**
Lijphart: Ch. 10
Alfred Stepan, “Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model”

10. June 19  **Electoral Rules**
Lijphart: Ch. 8

**The Consequences of Electoral Rules**
Calculating Seat Allocation and Proportionality

11. June 20  **Party Systems: Theory**
Calculating the Effective Number of Parties
Lijphart: Ch. 5

12. June 21  **Government Formation**
Lijphart: Ch. 6
Coalitions
Calculating Volatility, Coalition Options and Party Power Index
Lijphart: Chs. 14, 15.

**III. Topics in Comparative Politics**

13. June 25  **Challenges of Development**
O’Neill Ch. 10.

14. June 26  **The European Union and the Euro Crisis**

Andrew Glencross, “Eurozone Crisis as a Challenge to Democracy and Integration in Europe,” *Orbis* (Winter 2014)

15. June 27  **Student Presentations**
16. June 28  **Student Presentations**
17. July 2  **Student Presentations**
18. July 3  **Student Presentations**
19. July 5  **Final Examination**