Comparative Political Systems

GOVT 040   Summer 2020 First Session

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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

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Final examination</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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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 1  
   Introduction to Comparative Politics  
   O’Neil Ch. 1.

   **The State**  
   O’Neil, Ch 2.


   Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”

2. June 2  
   The Nation and Nationalism  
   O’Neil, Ch. 3, pp. 62-76;  

3. June 3  
   Regime Types  
   O’Neil, Ch. 6; Ch. 9 pp. 266-285  
   Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Modern Non-democratic Regimes”

4. June 4  
   Democracy  
   O’Neil, Ch. 5.

   **Civil Society**  

5. June 8  
   Political Cleavages and Parties
Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems”

Modernization and Postmodernization

6. June 9
Summary/Discussion

7. June 10
MIDTERM

8. June 11
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 15
Subnational Governance
Lijphart: Ch. 10
Alfred Stepan, “Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model”

10. June 16
Electoral Rules
Lijphart: Ch. 8
The Consequences of Electoral Rules
Calculating Seat Allocation and Proportionality

11. June 17
Party Systems: Theory
Calculating the Effective Number of Parties
Lijphart: Ch. 5

12. June 18
Government Formation
Lijphart: Ch. 6
Coalitions
Calculating Volatility, Coalition Options and Party Power Index
Lijphart: Chs. 14, 15.

13. June 22
Student Presentations

14. June 23
Student Presentations
15. June 24  Student Presentations
16. June 25  Student Presentations

III. Topics in Comparative Politics

17. June 29  Challenges of Development
O’Neill Ch. 10.

18. June 30  The European Union
Brigitte Young and Willi Semmler, “The European Sovereign Debt Crisis: Is Germany to Blame?” German Politics and Society, 29 no, 1 (2011)
Andrew Glencross, “Eurozone Crisis as a Challenge to Democracy and Integration in Europe,” Orbis (Winter 2014)

19. July 1  American Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective
*up-dated 2013 data on Canvas*

19. July 2  Final Examination