

Comparative Political Systems

GOVT 040 Summer 2021 First Session

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Lectures: M-R 3:15-5:15

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Office Hours 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 an 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. More information will be posted on-line at the appropriate time.

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. All course materials including powerpoints and recorded lectures will be posted on Canvas.

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

Texts

The following required texts are available through the Georgetown University bookstore. You can order a hardcopy to be delivered or obtain a digital copy.

Lijphart, Arend. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, second edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

O'Neil, Patrick. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, sixth edition. New York: Norton, 2018.

All other readings will be posted to Canvas. 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 7 **Introduction to Comparative Politics**
O'Neil Ch. 1.
The State
O'Neil, Ch 2.
Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 1-26, 155-191
Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation"
2. June 8 **The Nation and Nationalism**
O'Neil, Ch. 3, pp. 62-76;
Yael Tamir, "The Enigma of Nationalism" (Review Essay), *World Politics* 47, No. 3 (1995): 418-440.
3. June 9 **Regime Types**
O'Neil, Ch. 6; Ch. 9 pp. 266-285
Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, "Modern Non-democratic Regimes"
4. June 10 **Democracy**
O'Neil, Ch. 5.
Civil Society
Michael Foley and Bob Edwards, "The Paradox of Civil Society," Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone"
Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 1-16, 163-185
5. June 14 **Political Cleavages and Parties**

Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems"

Hanpeter Kriesi, "The transformation of cleavage politics:

The 1997 Stein Rokkan lecture," *European Journal of Political Research* 33 (1998): 165–185

Modernization and Postmodernization

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, "How Development Leads to Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): 33-48.

6. June 15 **Summary/Discussion**

7. June 16 **MIDTERM**

Part II: Institutions and Elements of Democratic Systems

8. June 17 **The Executive**

Lijphart: Ch. 7

Linz and Horowitz, "Presidential v. Parliamentary Democracy: A Debate"

Parliaments

Lijphart: Ch 11

9. June 21 **Subnational Governance**

Lijphart: Ch. 10

Alfred Stepan, "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model"

10. June 22 **Electoral Rules**

Lijphart: Ch. 8

The Consequences of Electoral Rules

Calculating Seat Allocation and Proportionality

11. June 23 **Party Systems: Theory**

Calculating the Effective Number of Parties

Lijphart: Ch. 5

12. June 24 **Government Formation**

Lijphart: Ch. 6

Coalitions

Calculating Volatility, Coalition Options and Party Power Index

Lijphart: Chs. 14, 15.

13. June 28 **Challenges of Development**

O'Neill Ch. 10.

14. June 29 **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)

15. June 30 **Student Presentations**

16. July 1 **Student Presentations**

III. Topics in Comparative Politics

17. July 6 **Student Presentations**

18. July 7 **Student Presentations**

19. July 8 **Final Examination**