Comparative Political Systems

GOVT 040   Summer 2021 First Session

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

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final examination</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</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 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.


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.
   Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”

2. June 8  The Nation and Nationalism
   O’Neil, Ch. 3, pp. 62-76;

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

5. June 14  Political Cleavages and Parties
Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems”

**Modernization and Postmodernization**

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

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**
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