GOVT 131: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2008
T/Th 10:10-11:25, GS HEC Auditorium

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the comparative study of political institutions and processes in different regions of the world. It is designed to help students develop conceptual, theoretical, and analytical tools that can be used to understand politics across a broad range of countries. It also fosters the development of critical thinking skills that are needed to assess alternative approaches or interpretations in the study of political phenomena. The course begins with an overview of theoretical approaches used in comparative political analysis, including structural, cultural, institutional, and rational choice perspectives. These approaches are then used to analyze a number of major substantive issues in the global political arena: the political economy of advanced industrial democracies, communism and post-communist transitions, authoritarianism and democratization in developing countries, ethnic conflict, social movements, and the political economy of development and globalization. Readings will cover most of the major world regions, including Western and Eastern Europe, East Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. They will also analyze U.S. politics in comparative perspective.

Course Requirements

Given the large size of this class, Tuesday and Thursday morning class sessions will sometimes be conducted in a lecture format, although discussion and student participation are strongly encouraged. Since lectures will build upon assigned readings and introduce new material, students should do the assigned readings before classes are held. Each student will also attend a weekly discussion section led by one of our TA’s, with topics determined by the readings and class lectures. Regular attendance at lectures and discussion sections is mandatory. Evaluation will be based on section participation, two exams, and a short research paper. The pre-lim exam will be given in-class on March 4. The final exam will be taken during the scheduled time slot (May 13, 7:00-9:30) in finals week. The final will focus primarily on material covered after the pre-lim exam. The research paper is due in class on April 10, and should be 6-8 double-spaced pages in length. Instructions for the research paper will be passed out early in the semester; the assignment will require that you draw from approaches studied in class to analyze either
political conflict or the political regime in a country of your choice.

Grading Policies and Procedures

Final grades will be determined as follows:
1. Participation in Sections: 20 percent
2. Pre-lim exam (March 4 in-class): 25 percent
3. Research paper (due April 10): 25 percent
4. Final exam (May 13): 30 percent

Students should plan their research papers well in advance; extensions beyond the due date will not be given. Papers turned in late will be penalized half a letter grade for each day they are tardy. Students who have medical problems or other emergencies that interfere with class or section attendance or with the completion of assignments should communicate with their TA in a timely fashion.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work. Plagiarism, or academic theft (i.e., passing off someone else’s work as your own), will be grounds for disciplinary action. If you have questions about plagiarism, proper referencing procedures, or other issues of academic integrity, please discuss them with me or your TA, or consult Cornell’s Code of Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others (http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html).

Assigned Readings

Assigned readings for each class session are listed on the syllabus. The assigned texts have been ordered for you to purchase at the Cornell Bookstore; a copy of most of the assigned texts is also on reserve at Uris Library. Electronic links to articles and other assigned readings can be found on the course Blackboard website (www.blackboard.cornell.edu) or the Cornell Library catalog (www.library.cornell.edu). The assigned texts are as follows:

7. *Darfur 2007: Chaos by Design* (Human Rights Watch, 2007) (optional purchase; report is also available on-line through Cornell Library catalog)

Students should do additional reading for their research papers, including some reading from scholarly sources (i.e., book manuscripts or the major journals of the sub-field such as World Politics, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Journal of Democracy, and Studies in Comparative International...
Development). There are also major, interdisciplinary area studies journals devoted to each of the major world regions: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Useful data is also available from a number of websites. For social and economic data, you might try the World Bank (www.worldbank.org) or the United Nations Development Program (www.undp.org). Election data is available from www.electionworld.org (as well as the Europa World Yearbook and the Political Handbook of the World, which also include information on political parties and regime institutions). Ratings of democracy and civil and political liberties are available from Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org). For human rights, see Amnesty International (http://web.amnesty.org) or Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org). For corruption and governance, see Transparency International (www.transparency.org).

Class Schedule and Weekly Topics

Week 1: Jan. 22– Course Introduction
   Jan. 24– Approaches to the Study of Comparative Politics: Structure, Culture, and Institutions

Part I: The Political Economy of Industrialized Democracies

Week 2: Jan. 29-- American Exceptionalism? U.S. Democracy in Comparative Perspective (Kingdon, Chaps. 1-3)
   Jan. 31-- American Democracy and Economic Liberalism (Kingdon, Chaps. 4-5)

Week 3: Feb. 5-- State-Building and Parliamentarism in Europe (Bale, Chaps. 1 & 4)
   Feb. 7-- Elections and Proportional Representation in Europe (Bale, Chap. 6)

Week 4: Feb. 12-- Party Systems, Social Cleavages, and Social Actors in Europe (Bale, Chap. 5 & 8)
   Feb. 14-- Social Democracy, Welfare States, and the “Varieties” of Capitalism (Bale, Chap. 9)

Week 5: Feb. 19-- Immigration and the Politics of Nationalism in Europe (Bale, Chap. 10) plus

Part II: Transitions from Communism: Market Reform and the Challenge of Democratization

   Feb. 21-- Communism and its Demise in Russia
      *M. Steven Fish, “Russia’s Fourth Transition,” Journal of Democracy (July 1994) (available electronically through Cornell Library catalog)

Week 6: Feb. 26-- Russia after Communism: Political and Economic Change
      *Steve Levitsky and Lucan Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” Journal of
Week 7: March 4-- Pre-lim Exam (in class)

Part III: Authoritarianism, Democratization, and Political Conflict in Developing Areas

March 6-- Patrimonialism and Authoritarianism: The Ethiopian Case (Kapuscinski, Chap. 1)

Week 8: March 11-- The Logic of Authoritarian Rule (Kapuscinski, Chap. 2)
March 13-- The Demise of Authoritarianism (Kapuscinski, Chap. 3)

March 15-23: Spring Break

Week 9: March 25-- Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Middle East (Jamal, Chaps. 1-2)
March 27-- Civil Society and Political Culture: The Case of Palestine (Jamal, Chaps. 3-4)

Week 10: April 1-- Islam, Political Authority, and Political Rebellion (Jamal, Chaps. 5-6) plus
April 3-- Ethnicity and Political Conflict: The Case of Darfur

Week 11: April 8-- Social Class and Political Conflict in Latin America: Chile’s Democratic Breakdown (Constable and Valenzuela, Preface and Chaps. 1-2)
April 10-- Military Intervention and Political Repression in Chile (Constable and Valenzuela, Chaps. 4 & 6)
(Research Paper Due)

Week 12: April 15-- Chile’s Market Revolution (Constable and Valenzuela, Chaps. 7-9)
April 17-- Social Protest and Democratic Transition in Chile (Constable and Valenzuela, Chaps. 10-12)

Part IV: The Political Economy of Globalization

Week 13: April 22-- The Logic of Globalization [Kesselman, Selections 2.1 (Marx and Engels), 2.2 (Polanyi), 2.3 (Sen), 3.1 (Friedman), 3.2 (Friedman), & 3.3 (Wolf)]
April 24--- Globalization, Economic Development, and Inequality [Kesselman, Selections 3.6 (Shiva) and 4.1- 4.4 (Dollar & Kraay, Wade, Wolf, and Bhagwati)]

Week 14: April 29—Capital, Labor and the State in the Global Economy [Kesselman, Selections 3.4 (Stiglitz), 5.1 – 5.4 (Millen & Holtz, D’Mello, Kristoff & Dunn, and Greenhouse), and 6.1 (Strange)
May 1-- Globalization, Civil Society, and Social Resistance [Kesselman, Selections 9.1 (Keck and Sikkink), 9.3 (Forero), 9.4 (“Notes from Nowhere”), 9.5 (Juergensmeyer), and 11.1 (Cavanagh & Mander)
Final Exam: Tuesday, May 13, 7:00-9:30