

GOVT 121: Comparative Political Systems

Summer 2008, Session 2

Monday – Thursday: 10:30 – 12:30

ICC 202

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Office Hours: Wed. and Thurs. 9-10 or by appointment

Course Description

This course is a general introduction to the concepts, theories, and content of comparative politics. Why do some elected governments perform better than others? What role does culture or religion play in influencing political systems or outcomes? How can we compare politics across a variety of countries? Is there a link between economic growth and type of government? Is America politically unique? Does this explain why we don't have universal health care and European states do? And what are the chances for democracy in the Middle East, anyway? We will not be able to answer all of these questions, but this course will empower you with the tools and background knowledge to broach these types of inquiries (and even form a few of your own!).

The focus throughout this course will be on linking general concepts to real-world places and contemporary issues. Therefore, the class is divided into two sections. The first half will cover the major themes and core ideas of interest to political scientists, including the state, civil society, political parties, and regime types. The second half will turn to substantive areas of interest, surveying major political systems and key issues. Students will have the opportunity of delving deeper into more specific areas of interests through course assignments.

This course can serve as a foundation for political science majors as well as for non-majors interested in politics.

Course Objectives

- Use the various theoretical and methodological tools of comparative politics to explain political behavior and processes in various countries and regions. (In other words, understand how “textbook concepts” apply to the real world.)
- Engage in critical thinking and reasoning.
- Voraciously consume political information and news from diverse sources.
- Articulate reasoned and respectful perspectives on political topics.
- Generate enthusiasm for pursuing additional studies in political science.

Course Requirements

This is an introductory course with class time devoted to both lecture and discussion. As this is a summer class, we will be moving very quickly through the material so it is important that you keep up with all readings and assignments.

Grades will be based on the following assignments:

Participation	10%
Blog essay and response posts	15%
Presentations	20%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	30%

The best way to succeed in this class is by showing up and being prepared. All assigned readings should be read by the date they are due, and please be sure to always bring your readings and notes to class. **Participation** is worth an entire letter grade; I cannot underemphasize the importance of active learning. Attendance to all classes is expected. Regular attendance offers you the chance to engage with the course material and, more importantly, with your fellow classmates in a small group setting. Each session should be taken as an opportunity to explore new ideas and actually “do” some of the most fundamental things to studying politics—discuss, debate, and *think systematically* about the world in which we live. Lectures also cover material not covered in your assigned readings, which is included on your exams.

I would like to encourage everyone to participate in class, but if public speaking just isn't your thing, you need to demonstrate to me that you are prepared, respectful, alert and attentive. If you don't like talking in class, I urge you to talk to me before or after class, or in my office, or send me an e-mail if you have any questions or comments you'd like to share.

For a second opportunity to engage with the readings and other classmates, you will be required to write three **blog entries**, as well as post three **responses**. Blog entries should be around 250 words, and responses around 100 words. Entries should be critical but respectful, well-written and thoughtful. Blog entries must be done by 10pm Sunday night, covering any of the prior week's readings. Response blogs are due the next day (Monday) by 10 pm.

Each student (working in groups of four) will do a **presentation** on a country, theme, or political debate throughout the duration of the course. It will require working together on research and presentation, using concepts and theories we've covered in class to outline and discuss various case studies and subjects. Creativity is highly encouraged!

There will be an **in-class midterm** on the material covered in the first-half of the course. It will be multiple choice and short-answer. The **final exam** will be take-home, and cover material from the entire course. It will consist of short-answer and essay responses.

On deadlines: In principle, deadlines cannot be changed. However, allowance will be made for cases in which genuine emergencies prevent students from completing work on time. Such emergencies might include medical treatment or bereavement. Having a time-consuming internship, impending deadlines for other courses, or extra-curricular commitments are not emergencies. Students should let the instructor know as far in advance as possible about any potential problems.

On the Honor System: Georgetown University is an honor-code school for undergraduates. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be handled according to the university's honor code.

See: <http://www12.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/regulations6.html>

Readings

The following required texts are available for purchase at the University Bookstore in Leavy. Books are also on reserve at Lauinger library.

- Patrick O'Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006).
- Patrick O'Neil and Ronald Rogowski, *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*, 2nd edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006).
- Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

All other readings will be available through Blackboard [Bb].

In addition to course readings, students should follow current events and international affairs. I enjoy the BBC news website, National Public Radio (NPR), and *The Economist*. If there is a specific country you have an interest in (Germany? Ghana? Guatemala?), I encourage you to try and get into the habit of listening to news broadcasts, or reading their national paper online. With Internet, all things are possible...

Course Schedule

~ WEEK 1 ~

Part I: The “Science” of Studying Politics: Tools and Concepts

July 7: What are politics? How do we compare?

1. O'Neil, chapter 1
2. Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, "Research Traditions and Theory in Comparative Politics: An Introduction" in O'Neil and Rogowski

July 8: States

1. O'Neil, chapter 2
2. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in O'Neil and Rogowski
3. Jeffrey Herbst, "War and the State in Africa" in O'Neil and Rogowski

July 9: Nationalism and Ethnicity

1. O'Neil, chapter 3 (pp. 44-56)
2. Eric Hobsbawm, "Nationalism" in O'Neil and Rogowski
3. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2003), chapters 1, 3. [Bb]
4. Malcolm Billings, "Putting Jamestown Into Context," *BBC News Online*, 3 May 2007 [Bb]

July 10: Ideas and Culture

1. O'Neil, chapter 3 (pp. 56-76)
2. Samuel Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations" in O'Neil and Rogowski
3. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in O'Neil and Rogowski

Recommended: Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" and "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973)

~ WEEK 2 ~

July 14: Interests and Institutions

1. Adam Smith, "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" in O'Neil and Rogowski
2. Douglass North, "Institutions" in O'Neil and Rogowski
3. David Brooks, "How Voters Think," *The New York Times*, 18 January 2008 [Bb]

Recommended: Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

July 15: Civil Society [meet in Healy 104]

1. Robert D. Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1995), pp. 664-683 [Bb]

2. Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic” in O’Neil and Rogowski

meet with students from the Middle Eastern Partnership Initiative

July 16: Regime Type I: Authoritarianism

1. O’Neil, chapter 5
2. Linz and Stepan, “Modern Nondemocratic Regimes” in O’Neil and Rogowski
3. M. Steven Fish, “Islam and Authoritarianism” in O’Neil and Rogowski

In-class film: *Triumph of the Will*

July 17: Regime Type II: Democracy

1. O’Neil, chapter 6
2. Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “What Democracy Is...and Is Not” in O’Neil and Rogowski
3. Arend Lijphart, “Constitutional Choices for New Democracies” in O’Neil and Rogowski

Recommended: Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” in O’Neil and Rogowski

~ WEEK 3 ~

July 21: Theories of Development (Democracy)

1. Robert Dahl, chapters 1-2, 10-11
2. Larry Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes”

Recommended: Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transitions Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), pp. 5-21.

July 22: Democratic Performance

1. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, chapters 1, 5, 6, skim 2
2. Maurice Duverger, “The Number of Parties” in O’Neil and Rogowski

Recommended: Benjamin Reilly, “Electoral Systems for Divided Societies,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002): 156-170.

July 23: Political Economy: The State and the Market

1. O’Neil, chapter 4
2. Alberto Alesina, et al., “Why Doesn’t the United States Have a European Style Welfare State?” in O’Neil and Rogowski

Recommended: Charles E. Lindblom, “The Market as Prisoner,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1982), pp. 324-336; Elinor Ostrom, “The Danger of Self

Evident Truths,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2000), pp. 33-44.

July 24: Midterm

~ WEEK 4 ~

Part II: Country and Regional Studies

July 28: Advanced Democracies

1. O’Neil, chapter 7
2. Jan Zielonka, "Challenges of EU Enlargement," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2004), pp. 22-35. [Bb]
3. Anne Applebaum, “Pity the Poor Eurocrats,” *The Washington Post*, 17 June 2008, p. A17. [Bb]

In-class film: *Immigration: An Inconvenient Truth* (Channel 4, UK)

Presentations 1 (suggestions: France, Germany)

July 29: The Islamic World

1. Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr, “The Rise of ‘Muslim Democracy’,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2005), pp. 13-27. [Bb]
2. Larry Diamond, “Lessons From Iraq?,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2005), pp. 9-23. [Bb]

Recommended: Amaney A. Jamal and Mark A. Tessler, “Attitudes in the Arab World,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2008), pp. 97-110. [Bb]

Presentation 2 (suggestions: Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey)

July 30: China

1. Ian Buruma, “What Beijing Can Learn from Moscow” in O’Neil and Rogowski
2. Henry S. Rowen, “When Will the Chinese People Be Free?” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2007), pp. 38-52. [Bb]
3. Howard W. French, “China’s Communists Slowly Losing Credibility,” *International Herald Tribune*, 19 October 2007. [Bb]
4. “Angry China,” *The Economist*, 3 May 2008. [Bb]

Recommended: John L. Thornton, “China’s Leadership Gap,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 2006) pp. 133-40. [Bb]

July 31: Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries

1. O’Neil, chapter 9

2. Adam Przeworski et al, "Political Regimes and Economic Growth" in O'Neil and Rogowski
3. Robert J. Barro, "Democracy: A Recipe for Growth?" in O'Neil and Rogowski

Recommended: Amartya Sen, "Development: Which Way Now?" *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 93, No. 372 (Dec 1983), pp. 745-762; Joel Migdal, *Strong States and Weak Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Presentation 3 and 4 (suggestions: Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela)

~ WEEK 5 ~

Aug 4: Post-Communism

1. O'Neil, chapter 8
2. Marc Morjé Howard, "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), pp. 157-169. [Bb]
3. "A Tale of Two Slavic States," *The Economist*, 1 June 2006. [Bb]
4. James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "Russia's No Democracy. So what?," *The Washington Post*, 9 April 2006, p. B2. [Bb]

Recommended: Valerie Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Post-Communist Experience" in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002): 157-169.

Presentation 5 (suggestions: Poland, Ukraine, Georgia, Russia)

Aug 5: Globalization and Identity: The End of the Nation-State?

1. Seyla Benhabib, "Who are 'We?' Dilemmas of Citizenship in Contemporary Europe," *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 147-177. [Bb]
2. Mark Juergensmeyer, "The New Religious State" in O'Neil and Rogowski

In-class film: *L'Auberge Espagnole*

Aug 6: Globalization and Markets

1. O'Neil, chapter 10
2. Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of the Rest," *Newsweek*, 12 May 2008. [Bb]
3. Clive Crook, "Why Middle America Needs Free Trade," *Financial Times*, Comment, 27 June 2007 [Bb]
4. David Leonhardt, "What's Really Squeezing the Middle Class?" *The New York Times*, 25 April 2007. [Bb]

Aug 7: Final Exam