POLS 120
Introduction to Comparative Politics
Summer 2012
Room: Tarbutton 218
TeWTh: 2:30-4:45

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Course Description
This course provides an introduction to fundamental questions and methods of inquiry in the field of comparative politics. We will center our substantive discussions around the following three questions. What explains the construction and maintenance of political order? What explains the extent to which governments faithfully represent voter interests? What are the consequences of regime type and government form for human welfare?

Reading Material
We will use a single textbook, which you are expected to purchase. I have left a copy at the library’s course reserve. I will make additional readings available to you via the electronic course reserve (denoted CR below). You will find other readings on the electronic course reserve.


Course Goals
You should understand the questions around which the course is framed. You should understand the core theoretical models, which provide answers to these questions. You should be able to evaluate the empirical evidence testing implications of these models. Finally, you should be familiar with the key concepts used in comparative politics.

Grading
Your final grade is a weighted average of the following components:

1. Attendance/Participation (10%)
   Attendance is mandatory and participation is strongly encouraged.

2. Two Examinations (Each worth 35%)
   Exams will require you to develop short, essay-style responses to questions concerning core issues we cover in class. You should be able to define concepts and describe theoretical arguments. You should be able to summarize the empirical tests of the theories we cover. See dates under class schedule.

3. Paper Review and Discussion Questions (20%)
   You must draft a short review of a research paper in comparative politics (2-4 pages should be fine). In the first part of your review, you must identify the core research question, summarize the theoretical argument and describe briefly the key empirical finding. In the second part of your review, identify an element of the paper, which you believe is questionable in a way that undermines the author’s findings. Finally, identify a question left open by the paper or an implication that is interesting to you and speaks to the questions around which the course is framed.
You may choose from a list of four papers, which can be found in bold below. These papers are stored on the electronic course reserve. On the day we will discuss the paper, you are also responsible for drafting three questions designed to stimulate a class discussion.

Your review is due in class; however, the questions must be distributed electronically to the class by 10 a.m. (on the day of the class to which you have been assigned). Your questions should not raise definitional issues but rather raise concerns you have with the analysis or suggest implications of the analysis for a question that you think would be interesting to discuss. For example, consider the following question.

Insofar as individuals feel better represented by proportional systems of representation than majoritarian systems, should the United States change its electoral system? What challenges would a group of individuals wishing to change the system confront?

Extra-Credit Work
Under no circumstances will extra credit work be permitted.

Email
I expect you to check your email. You are responsible for the material I send electronically.

Late Exam Arrival/Missed Exam Policy
Students will be allotted the entire class period for exams occurring during the semester. For final exams, students will be allotted the entire final exam period that the University has appropriated. Students are expected to be in class for the beginning of the exam. If a student is late by 10 minutes or more, I will deduct 10 points from her final grade.

Absences for exams will be excused for participation in formally sanctioned University events if the proper documentation is provided to the instructor prior to the event. Absences will also be excused for extraordinary events if they are accompanied by sufficient (i.e. Health Services Excuse Forms) documentation, as defined above under “absence policy” within two calendar days of the absence or late arrival. The instructor reserves the right to determine what constitutes an extraordinary circumstance.

If the student has been excused for the absence, she will have five working days to make up a missed exam. The instructor reserves the right to administer makeup exams of any format (multiple choice, short answer, essay), which may not necessarily correspond to the original exam’s format. If a student misses an exam and does not have an excused absence, the student will receive a zero for the exam.

Note on Extraordinary Circumstances
Under no conditions will a “power-outage” or an “alarm clock failure” constitute an extraordinary circumstance.

Final Course Grades
Final course letter grades will reflect the Department of Political Science’s grading standard, detailed below. Clearly, it is impossible for each assessment to reflect the standard exactly. Instead, the assessments, taken as a whole, are designed to produce a final grade that reflects the department’s standards.
Department of Political Science Grading Standard

A Exceptional Performance
Consistently outstanding work on all course-related tasks at a level that distinguishes the student from other members of the class. A comprehensive and incisive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A frequently demonstrated exceptional capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. The ability to master and integrate large amounts of factual material and abstract theories. An outstanding ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

A- Excellent Performance
Consistently strong work on all course-related tasks. A comprehensive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A clearly demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands well and can integrate the relevant factual and theoretical material central to the course. A strong ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B+ Very Good Performance
Consistently above average work on all course-related tasks. A very good grasp of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A generally demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical, and logical thinking. A very good command of factual and theoretical material, and some capacity to integrate the two. A solid ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B Good Performance
Good and generally consistent work on all course-related tasks. A general understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Modest evidence of the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. A good understanding of factual and theoretical material, but limited evidence of the capacity to integrate the two. A basic ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B- Satisfactory Performance
Satisfactory work on course-related tasks. An understanding of the basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. An infrequently demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands at a basic level the facts and theories related to the course, but demonstrates weak integration skills. A limited or inconsistent ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

C+/C/C- Adequate Performance
Adequate performance on course-related tasks. An understanding of the basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A rarely demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking (C+). An inability to go beyond a recitation of basic factual material related to the class (C). Demonstrated weaknesses in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills (C-).

D/D+ Minimal Passing Performance
Barely acceptable work on course-related tasks. A generally superficial and often inconsistent familiarity with the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A failure to demonstrate the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking related to course content (D+). An uneven understanding of basic factual material related to the course; no evidence of fact/theory integration. Demonstrates significant gaps in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills (D).

F Unacceptable Performance

Fails to meet minimum course expectations. Unable to understand even the most basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Demonstrates an inability to engage in coherent written or oral discussion of course material. Does not satisfy specific course expectations with respect to attendance, deadlines, participation, etc.

Incomplete Grades

No incomplete grades will be given unless there is an agreement between the instructor and the student prior to the end of the course. The instructor retains the right to determine legitimate reasons for an incomplete grade.

Integrity of Scholarship

I will follow the guidelines established by Emory College, which can be found at http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html. In short, don’t cheat. The benefits are small. Even if the probability of getting caught is tiny, the costs of getting caught are huge.

Courtesy in the Classroom.

Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. This means no cell phones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the professor or discussion leader), reading newspapers, etc. during class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about kids or other family members, keep it on “vibrate.” Entering and leaving is distracting to me and to other students. Therefore, you need to be on time for class and stay until the end. If you must enter late or leave early, please inform me before class begins and take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Also, please stay with the door to make sure it does not ‘bang’ as you enter or leave. Repeated disruption of class may lead to penalties that reduce your final grade.

Class discussions of political issues can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussions need to be scholarly. Scholarly comments are:

- Respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement.
- Related to the class and course material. Scholarly comments advance the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs.
- Are delivered in normal tones and in a non-aggressive manner.

Unacceptable behaviors in our classroom include:

- Personal attacks. This includes attacks on a person’s appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- Interrupting other students is unacceptable. Raise your hand and wait to be called on either by the discussion leader or myself to prevent this problem.
• Using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students, and being physically aggressive are unacceptable.
• Ignoring my authority to protect the integrity of the classroom is unacceptable. When you are asked to discontinue a conversation that violates the guidelines that are outlined above, I expect you to stop.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you anticipate needing any type of an academic accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please discuss this with the instructor within the first week of class. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should consult the Office of Disability Services at 404-727-6016 (TDD: 404-712-2049).

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

**Course Schedule**

July 3 – Course Introduction

July 4 – Holiday, no class

July 5 – What is Comparative Political Science?
  • CGG, Chapters 2-3

July 10 – What is Politics? What is the State?
  • CGG, Chapters 3-4

July 11 – Economic Determinants of Democracy
  • CGG, Chapters 5-6
  • Note: You can skim the second half of Chapter 5, which deals with evaluating measures of democracy

July 12 – Social Determinants of Democracy
  • CGG, Chapter 7
  • *Miguel et al, 2008, (CR)***
    o Culture and Violence

July 17 – Regime Consequences
  • CGG, Chapter 9
  • *Anderson and Tverdova 2003, (CR)***

July 18 – Review Session

**July 19 – EXAM 1**

July 24 – The Whacky Properties of Preference Aggregation
  • CGG, Chapter 10

July 25 – Electoral Systems
July 26 – Party Systems
• CGG, Chapter 13
• Boix 1999, (CR)***

July 31 – Governments and Government Formation
• CGG, Chapter 11

August 1 – Veto Players
• CGG, Chapter 14

August 2 – Legal Institutions
• Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2001, (CR)***

August 7 – Review Session

August 8 – EXAM 2