

Case Western Reserve University
Department of Political Science

Fall 2009
POSC 260

Dr. Vincent McHale
Mather House #222

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Political Science 260 is designed to introduce the student to the comparative study of political phenomena, defined in terms of institutions, processes, and individual and group behavior. This course views political life from a developmental perspective. The focus will be on the comparative analysis of the interrelationships among historical, cultural, social, and economic characteristics of national political systems, and their governmental structures and patterns of mass political behavior. The course will approach politics as being primarily concerned with the study of government and all that the notion of governance implies -- the origin, emergence, integration, transformation, and decline of political communities; their styles of organization, and the rules by which they resolve conflicts and make collective decisions; their public policies; and their relations with one another. Viewed in this manner, politics is primarily concerned with the decision processes by which a national community distributes its scarce resources and regulates its collective life, and we refer to the activities of individuals and groups as they engage in efforts to influence and/or implement these collective decisions as political behavior.

This course presupposes no previous student background in the subject matter. With only one semester available, the treatment will necessarily be only an introduction to the salient features of political life. Reading materials have been chosen with the thought of providing sound analysis and interpretation rather than exacting details, although factual materials will not be omitted. *The lectures are designed neither to imitate the readings nor to provide mention of a great number of topics. Instead, an effort will be made to build the lectures around conceptual topics which seem to be fundamental to the comparative study of politics.*

Requirements:

Regular class attendance is expected. Attendance will be monitored with a "sign-in" sheet for each class. Since the lectures will be largely independent of the reading, it will be difficult, if not impossible for students to master the subject matter without regular class attendance. Students with more than three (3) unexcused class absences after the "drop/add" period will have their final course grade reduced by one letter grade. Even when absences are excused, an unusual number of class absences (e.g., over 7) will result in a grade reduction. There will be no exceptions to this policy. There will be two examinations (midterm and final), and two brief (about 5 – 7 pages) research exercises. The details of the research exercises will be covered in separate class handouts. The final course grade will be based on the following weighted distribution:

1. class attendance and participation (10%) – *Important for borderline grades*
2. midterm examination (30%)
3. research exercises (20%)
4. final examination (40%)

Consult the attached class performance sheet for a more detailed explanation of grade evaluation.

Text (Available at the University Bookstore):

Mark Kesselman, *Readings in Comparative Politics* (2nd ed., 2010).

Other reading materials may on occasion be placed on reserve in Kelvin Smith Library, or sent personally to each student via a PDF email attachment.

Several handouts (calendars, notes, charts, graphs, etc.) will be distributed in class. Students are responsible for obtaining all class handouts even when absent from class.

For Your Reference:

Definitions of terms and concepts used in the course lectures and readings can be found in Jack C. Plano, *The Dictionary of Political Analysis*, or Carl Beck, *Political Science Thesaurus II*. Otherwise use Google (Wikipedia).

Office Hours:

Monday & Wednesday, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Mather House #222

Students encountering difficulty with the course assignments, or who wish to have material clarified, are urged to consult with the instructor without delay on a “walk-in” basis during regular office hours, or by appointment. Messages to the instructor can be left on extension 2425. The instructor can also be contacted via email(vem). Messages and/or queries will be answered usually within 24 hours.

A monthly calendar of lecture topics and other relevant information pertaining to the class will be provided to each student on a timely basis. Students will be notified in class or via email regarding any changes in the calendar.

Cell Phones and Computers:

Please turn off all cell phones before entering class. The class period is only 50 minutes. No texting or tweeting. Notebook computers are permitted in class provided they do not disturb other students.

IMPORTANT DATES

First class meeting	August 24 th
Labor Day holiday	September 7 th (NO CLASS)
<i>Last day for drop/add</i>	September 4 th
Midterm examination	October 12 th (firm)
Midterm grades due	October 19 th
Fall break	October 19– 20 th (NO CLASS)
Paper #1 due	October 30 th (on or before)
<i>Last day to withdraw</i>	November 6 th
Thanksgiving holiday	November 26 – 27 th (NO CLASS)
Paper #2 due	December 4 th (on or before)
Last class meeting	December 4 th
Final examination	December 11 th (8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.)
<i>All outstanding work due</i>	December 16 th (before 5:00 p.m.)

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating on examinations, etc.) is a serious offense that can result in loss of credit, suspension, and possibly expulsion from the university. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

1. THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICS: ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES
 - a. What is comparative politics?
 - b. Why compare? What should be compared? How should we compare?
 - c. Defining the scope of the "political"
 - d. Power and authority relations
 - e. Politics as conflict management
 - f. Functions and capacities of national political systems
 - g. Different types of national political systems

Readings: Kesselman, Introduction; Chapter 1 (1.1,1.2, 1.4, and 1.6)

2. HISTORICAL SOURCES OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL CONFLICT, AND POLITICAL CLEAVAGES

- a. Political development and nation-building
- b. Political divisions within nations
- c. Conflict over sources of legitimate power
- d. Coping with change: political crises and political decay
- e. Variations in the socioeconomic context of political life
- f. External influences on domestic politics

Reading: Kesselman, Chapter 2 (2.2, 2.3, and 2.5); Chapter 3 (3.1 and 3.6)

3. POLITICAL CULTURE: SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF POLITICS

- a. The individual and politics: personality, beliefs, values
- b. Nations and nationalism
- c. Political symbols
- d. Learning about politics: agents of socialization
- e. Political communication
- f. Political action: expression and focusing of demands and supports
- g. Political violence
- h. Varieties of political participation
- i. Political attitudes and democracy

Reading: Kesselman, Chapter 4 (4.1, 4.3 and 4.5); Chapter 5 (5.2)

4. POLITICAL GROUPS AND GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

- a. Politics as collective activity
- b. Interest articulation as a comparative concept
- c. Typologies of political groups
- d. Elements of group effectiveness
- e. Consociational versus majoritarian rules in national political systems

Reading: Kesselman, Chapters 4 (4.2); Chapter 5 (5.3 and 5.5)

5. POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

- a. The origin, structure, and functions of political parties
- b. Parties in "one-party" systems
- c. Parties and electoral systems
- d. Extremist and single issue parties
- e. Parties: Are they necessary?

Reading: To be announced

6. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS RECRUITMENT

- a. Who governs? Characteristics of political elites
- b. Societal and cultural influences on who governs
- c. Elite socialization and elite ideologies
- d. Political succession: continuity and change in political decisionmakers
- e. Political ascent and political descent

Reading: Kesselman, Chapter 6 (6.1, 6.2 and 6.5)

7. POLICYMAKING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

- a. The fundamental rules of regimes: constitutions, codes, traditions
- b. Diffusion, innovation, and copying of political institutions
- c. Executive and legislative styles
- d. Political performance perceptions, measurements, and analysis
- e. Controversy over the role of the state in modern society

Reading: Kesselman, Chapter 6 (6.3)

***** Midterm Exam – Monday, October 12th *****

Selected Empirical Political Systems

8. CHARACTERISTICS OF EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACIES

- a. United Kingdom
- b. France
- c. Germany

Readings: Class handouts

9. POLITICS IN THE POST-COMMUNIST STATES OF EUROPE

- a. Russia
- b. Poland

Readings: Class handouts

10. FRAGILE DEMOCRACIES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Readings: Class handouts

11. MAJOR ASIAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

- a. China
- b. India
- c. Japan

Readings: Class handouts

12. POLITICAL LIFE IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Readings: Class handouts

12. THE EMERGING POLITICS OF SUPRANATIONALISM

Readings: Class handouts

Concluding Comments

13. POLITICAL LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES; TRENDS, PROJECTIONS, CHALLENGES

- a. Coping with political violence
- b. Persistence of communal nationalism
- c. Quality of life, social deviance, income distribution
- d. Demographic issues
- e. Managing transnational interdependencies: Is national sovereignty eroding?
- f. Transitioning to democracy

Reading: Kesselman, Chapter 7 (7.1, 7.3, 7.5, 7.6)

***** **Final Exam – December 10th, 8:30 to 11:30a.m.*******

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EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

In order for a student to receive a passing grade for this course, all requirements must be completed. The following criteria will be employed in determining the final grade:

- A** - **Superior work:** Student demonstrates command of the subject matter in *considerable detail; exhibits a clarity, precision, and some originality in analytical argument*; written work well-organized, neat, proofread, and free of grammatical and/or spelling errors. All assignments completed on time. *Almost perfect attendance.*
- B** - **Good Work:** Student demonstrates command of the subject matter; exhibits clarity and precision in analytical argument; written work well-organized, neat, proofread, and free of grammatical and/or spelling errors. All assignments completed on time *unless specifically excused*. Good class attendance – no excessive class absences.
- C** - **Fair or Competent Work:** Student demonstrates *reasonable* command of the subject matter; exhibits clarity and *reasonable* precision in analytical argument; written work *reasonably* organized, with few grammatical and/or spelling errors. *Failure to complete one or more assignments on time. Excessive class absences.*
- D** - **Passing:** Less than competent work.
- F** - **Failure:** Student demonstrates little, if any, command of the subject matter; unsatisfactory written work in content or style; failure to complete one or more written assignments (*unless specifically excused*); failure to take either the midterm or final examinations (*unless specifically excused*); poor class attendance.
- I** - **Incomplete:** Assigned at my discretion according to the provisions outlined in the General Bulletin of the University. *An I grade is not automatic; it must be arranged in advance. Students must be aware of the deadline in removing an I grade before it becomes an F. It is not my responsibility to notify students of the impending deadline for removal of the I grade.* Please check the university calendar.