

Case Western Reserve University
Department of Political Science

Spring 2014
POSC 160

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. *The goal is to strike a balance between theoretical and practical knowledge.* 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 one (possibly two depending on time constraint) 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%) – In class (50 minutes)
3. research exercises (30%) – One or two short papers
4. final examination (30%) - Comprehensive

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

There is no text for this course. Short readings will be either handed out in class or sent personally to each student via a scanned PDF email attachments. Students are encouraged to read the news media on a daily basis regarding world affairs. Especially useful are *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*. Check for online access.

Several handouts (calendars, notes, charts, graphs, etc.) will occasionally 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, 1:00 -2:00; 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 major changes in the calendar.

Cell Phones and Notebook 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	January 13 th
Midterm examination	March 5th (firm)
No Class	March 7th
Midterm grades due	March 10th
Spring break	March 10 through 14 th (No classe
Last class meeting	April 28 th
Final examination	May 5 th (8:30 to 11:30 am)

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, Theoretical and Philosophical Issues

1. THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICS: ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

- a. What is politics? A definition
- b. What is comparative politics? A set of questions
- c. Why compare? What should be compared? How should we compare?
- d. Defining the scope of the "political"
- e. Power and authority relations
- f. Politics as conflict management
- g. Functions and capacities of national political systems
- h. Types of national political systems: similarities and differences – why?

Reading: (handout) “The Science and the Art of Comparative Politics”

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

- a. Political development and nation-building: Are they the same?
- b. Political divisions within nations – basic and temporal

- 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
- g. Reasons why political systems fail

Reading: (handout) "What Toppled the World's Earliest Imperial Regime?"

3. POLITICAL CULTURE: SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF POLITICS

- a. The individual and politics: personality, beliefs, values, and attitudes
- b. National and group identities
- c. Political symbols and their manipulation
- d. Learning about politics: agents of socialization
- e. Political communication and the media
- f. Political action: expression and focusing of demands and supports
- g. Political violence: the conduct of politics by other means
- h. Varieties of political participation
- i. Political attitudes, civic culture, and democracy

Reading: (handout) "Political Culture" *Comparative Politics: System, Process, Policy*
(handout) "Can Greeks Become Germans?"

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: characteristics of an elementary model
- e. Consociational versus majoritarian rules in national political systems
- f. Representation and participation

Reading: (handout) "Interest Associations" *Comparative Politics (op. cit.)*

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? Changing functions

Reading: (handout) "Introduction" *Political Parties of Europe*

6. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: RECRUITMENT VERSUS COOPTATION

- 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*: a comparative perspective

Reading: (handout) “The Gender Gap”

7. POLICYMAKING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

- a. What do governments do? An evolutionary model (security, investment, consumption, and compensation)
- b. The fundamental rules of regimes: traditions, codes, and constitutions
- c. Diffusion, innovation, and copying of political institutions
- d. Executive and legislative styles
- e. Political performance: perceptions, measurements, and analysis
- f. Controversy over the role of the state in modern society

Reading: (handout) “Why doesn’t the US have a European Style Welfare State?”

******* Midterm Exam – Wednesday, March 6th *******

Selected Empirical Political Systems

The following section examines several empirical examples of post-modern, modernizing, and weak post-colonial states viewed from a regional perspective. The major topics include contrasting historical legacies, variations in the socioeconomic settings, political culture, institutional development, contemporary social forces, and the current challenge of globalization. The lectures may be augmented occasionally by regional experts.

8. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES

- a. The legacy of wars in the 20th century
- b. Current socioeconomic setting
- c. Contrasting political cultures
- d. Social movements, interest groups, and political parties
- e. Elections, political recruitment
- f. Common economic problems
 - 1. United Kingdom
 - 2. France
 - 3. Germany

Reading: (to be announced)

9. TRANSITIONAL POLITICS IN THE POST-COMMUNIST STATES OF EUROPE

- a. Historical legacies, animosities, and territorial dismemberment
- b. Search for value consensus around new institutional architectures
- c. Elections, civil society, and elite accountability
 - 1. Russia
 - 2. Poland
 - 3. Disintegration of the former Yugoslavia

Readings: (to be announced)

10. FRAGILE DEMOCRACIES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE: MEXICO

- a. Mexico's revolution
- b. National identity and the "Indian" problem
- c. Religion and organized labor
- d. Regional diversity

Reading: (handout): "The Five Nations of Mexico"

11. DIVERSITY AMONG THE MAJOR ASIAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

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

Reading: (to be announced)

12. POLITICAL LIFE IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Reading: (to be announced)

13. THE EMERGING POLITICS OF SUPRANATIONALISM

Reading : (to be announced)

Concluding Comments

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

- a. Coping with political violence
- b. Persistence of communal and religious nationalisms
- c. Quality of life, social deviance, income distribution
- d. Demographic issues – too many (India); too few (Japan)
- e. Managing transnational interdependencies: the erosion of national sovereignty?
- f. Transitioning to democracy – successes, failures, or a new type of democracy?
- g. Globalization: the clash between connectivity and content flows.

Reading: (handout) “Regional Convergence in a Diverse World”

***** Final Exam – May 5th, 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.