Comparative Governments and Politics

Over the next 16 weeks, we will emphasize two general areas of comparative government and politics. In the first part of the course, we will focus on several theories, concepts and variables used in analyzing different systems of governments. In the second half, we will examine three political systems: Britain as a liberal democracy; Germany, moving from authoritarianism under the Kaiser into liberalism under the Weimar Republic, then returning to authoritarianism under the Third Reich, and finally returning to liberal democracy throughout the Cold War and Reunification; Russia, as previously absolutist and totalitarian while presently and painstakingly heading toward democracy.

STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE: Each class meeting will be divided between lectures, discussions on contemporary comparative politics, and occasional documentaries and films. Discussion will be based on handouts of articles on comparative politics from leading publications to be distributed in class at no cost to you. There will be three in-class examinations, including the final, two take-home written assignments (three pages each). The first in-class exam is objective (multiple choice & true and false), worth 25 points; the second is objective and subjective (short essays and definitions), worth 30 points; the third, a final, is both objective and subjective, worth 35 points. The first take-home written assignment is a research essay worth 5 points; the second, part of the final, is an essay based on the assigned readings. This brings your total up to 100 points. The grading system for this class is as follows: the grade of A begins at 87.5; B at 77.5; C at 67.5; and D at 57.5. The course also provides you with the opportunity to earn an additional 10 points over the 100. This opportunity is in the form of 5 unannounced quizzes (each is worth 2 points; they are multiple choice & true and false) which can be given at anytime during the course (or the period during which the class meets) and will cover the materials discussed up to and including the day of the quiz. Since these quizzes are not part of the basic course assignments, there will be no makeup or substitute assignments if they are missed. (Attendance is a must in this class). In-class exams require a SCANTRON form #882 and a No. 2 pencil. DROPING THE CLASS REMAINS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

The two take-home written assignments differ from each other. The first is in the form of a research essay. For the paper to be accepted and graded, a one-page statement about the topic, thesis, and sources to be used is required. Only when the statement is approved, you can start writing the three-page research essay. A guideline handout on how to write the assignments will be distributed in class. The second take-home assignment, which is due in the last week of class, will be part of the final examination. More about it will be discussed as we approach the last week of classes.

While writing your research essay, bear in mind the following findings. Based on a “Student Learning Outcome” analysis of a previous class, I found the following: Half of the students were able to employ a comparative politics theory to explain why a certain country has the political
system it has. One-fourth of the students described the politics of the country they studied, but labeled it either democratic or authoritarian without referring to any given theory.

One basic need deserving immediate attention is how to use theories and concepts in the form of the written essay. Most students are used to writing general and descriptive essays, paying insufficient attention to analysis and observation in terms of theoretical propositions.

One conclusion is that the majority of students need to improve their writing skills, mainly organization, focus, use of sources, and the relationship between supporting evidence and general assertions. Addressing writing issues would undoubtedly help many students to differentiate the merely descriptive from analysis, which requires the use of abstract theories and concepts.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK


FIRST WEEK:
Introduction
What is Comparative Politics?
Debates in Comparative Politics
A Guiding Approach: Political Institutions
A Guiding Idea: Reconciling Freedom and Equality
Looking Ahead

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp.1: Introduction

SECOND WEEK:
States
Defining the State
The Origins of Political Organization
The Rise of the Modern State
Comparing State Power
Studying States

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp.2: States

THIRD WEEK:
Nations and Society
Ethnic Identity
National Identity
Citizenship and Patriotism
Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Citizenship: Origins and Persistence
Sources of Ethnic and National Conflict
Political Attitudes and Political Ideology
Fundamentalism and the Crisis of Ideology
Political Culture
Society and Politics

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp. 3: Nations and Society

FOURTH WEEK:
Political Economy
The Components of Political Economy
Political-Economic Systems
Political-Economic Systems and the State: Comparing Outcomes
The Future of Political Economy
The End of Economic History?

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp. 4: Political Economy

FIFTH WEEK:
Political Economy (continued)

FIRST EXAMINATION

SIXTH WEEK:

Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism
Defining Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism
Sources of Nondemocratic Rule
Nondemocratic Regimes and Political Control
Types of Nondemocratic Rule
Nondemocratic Regimes in Retreat?

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp. 5: Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism

SEVENTH WEEK:
Democracy
What is Democracy?
The Origins of Liberal Democracy and the Rule of Law
Participation: Voting and Elections
Competition: Political Parties and the Separation of Powers
Liberty: Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, and Civil Society
Future Challenges to Democracy

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp. 6: Democracy

Advanced Democracies
Defining Advanced Democracies
Freedom and Equality in Advanced Democracies
Advanced Democracies Today
States and Sovereignty: Challenges and Opportunities
Social Change and Conflict
Economic Change
The Advanced Democracies in Transition

Readings:
O’Neil
Chp. 7: Advanced Democracies

EIGHTH WEEK:
Communism and Post Communism
Communism, Equality, and the Nature of Human Relations
Revolution and the “Triumph” of Communism
Putting Communism into Practice
Communist Political Economy
Societal Institutions under Communism
The Collapse of Communism
Political Institutions in Transition
Economic Institutions in Transition
Societal Institutions in Transition
The Legacy of Communism

Readings: Chp. 8:
O’Neil
Communism and Post Communism

NINTH WEEK:
Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries
Freedom and Equality in Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries
Institutions and Imperialism
The Challenges of Post Imperialism  
Prospects for Democracy and Development  
The Challenges of Development

Readings:  
O’Neil  
Chp. 9: Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries

TENTH WEEK:  
SECOND EXAMINATION

Globalization  
What is Globalization?  
Institutions and Globalization  
Political Globalization  
Economic Globalization  
Societal Globalization  
Globalization: Myths and Realities  
Freedom and Equality in a Globalized World

Readings:  
O’Neil  
Chp. 10: Globalization

ELEVENTH WEEK:  
Globalization (continued)

Political Violence  
What is Political Violence?  
Why Political Violence?  
Forms of Political Violence  
Political Violence in Context: Faith, Terrorism, and Revolution  
Countering Political Violence  
Meeting the Challenge of Political Violence

Readings:  
O’Neil  
Chp. 11: Political Violence

TWELFTH WEEK:
United Kingdom
Why Study this Case?
Political Institutions
The Branches of Government
The Party System
Elections
Civil Society
Ethnic and National Identity
Ideology and Political Culture

Readings: O’Neil, Fields and Share
Chp. 15: United Kingdom

THIRTEENTH WEEK:

United Kingdom (Continued)

FOURTEENTH WEEK:
GERMANY
Historical Background: Germany’s Difficult Path to Democracy
Democracy in the Federal Republic
Governments and Politics in the Federal Republic
Readings: Chp.6 from Comparative Politics by Charles Hauss (Chp. 6)

The Readings for Germany will be placed on reserve. Call number JF51.H33 2006

FIFTEENTH WEEK:
RUSSIA
Why Study this Case?
Political Institutions
The Branches of Government
The Electoral System
The Party System and Elections
Civil Society
Ethnic and National Identity
Ideology and Political Culture
Readings: O’Neil, Fields and Share
Chp. 6: Russia

SIXTEENTH WEEK:

FINAL EXAMINATION