

Political Science 50
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office hrs: Fri. 9-12 or by appointment

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Tu/Thurs. 2-3:15
Fowler A103B

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Comparative politics is the field within political science that tries to explain why countries vary in their domestic political institutions, in the political behavior of their citizens and elites, and in their public policies. In this course, we will focus on three main questions that have long been central to research in comparative politics: (a) the development of political systems, and relationship between economic and political development; (b) how democratic countries vary in their political institutions (e.g. electoral, judicial, administrative, and party systems) and why these differences matter; and (c) how democratic countries vary in the outputs of government, that is, in their public policies. We hope not just to acquaint you with the debates on these issues but to equip you to reach your own reasoned conclusions on them.

To understand and evaluate debates on these questions, you will need some fundamental “vocabulary.” This includes an understanding of what social science is all about, what political scientists mean precisely by the terms they use (e.g. development, democracy, proportional representation, industrial policy), and the kinds of institutions that major countries (and some minor ones) in all parts of the world now have or have had recently. Throughout, we will link the kinds of information we provide, and the work that we ask you to master, to the larger issues of comparative politics that the course addresses, and in this way we will do our best to avoid what introductory courses in comparative politics too often become, namely, a recital of dry and seemingly irrelevant facts about (to use a traditional subtitle) “governments of foreign powers” or a travelogue through exotic lands without any analytic framework to make sense of the diversity encountered.

We will thus do our best to acquaint you with what comparative politics, as political scientists actually conduct research in it, is all about. At the same time, we ask of you an understanding of what political science generally, and comparative politics particularly, is not: (a) it is not a continuation of high-school “civics” or “social studies” courses (although we do not want to discourage you from an interest in civic affairs); (b) it is not MacNeill-Lehrer commentary on current events (no matter how enlightening or useful MacNeill-Lehrer may be); (c) it is not mere opinion, no matter how well expressed, when it is unsupported by evidence or theory (although we encourage you to have opinions, we just do not consider them very relevant to what we are trying to do in the course); and (d) it is very rarely (today, in fact,

perhaps almost never) entirely devoid of some mathematics and statistics in its marshalling of evidence and argument. On this final point, we ask only that you make a genuine effort to think through the readings and problems we assign, even when these involve some technical language.

Requirements: The course requires two short papers, an in-class midterm and a cumulative final examination. The papers are focused on having you develop data analytic skills. The first paper asks you to analyze data on a specific issue handled in lecture. The second, slightly longer paper asks you to organize an argument and marshal empirical evidence in its favor. The final examination is comprehensive.

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

short paper 1	10 percent
short paper 2	20 percent
mid-term exam	20 percent
final exam	35 percent
section participation	15 percent

Readings: There are two textbooks required for the course—John McCormick, *Comparative Politics in Transition*, 2nd ed. (Harcourt Brace) and William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd ed. (Macmillan)—as well as a xeroxed packet of readings. The latter includes some classics of comparative politics (Aristotle, J.S. Mill, Marx and Engels, and others), some contemporary classics (the Linz-Horowitz debate on presidentialism versus parliamentarism, for instance), and a series of very informative surveys from *The Economist* magazine. The books are available from ASUCLA, and the xeroxed packets from Westwood Copies, 1001 Gayley Ave., Suite 104 (208-3233).

Date **Topic and Reading**

Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics

- April 6 Why do differences among regimes and polity types matter?
April 8 If every country is unique, how do we compare?
McCormick, introduction
J.S. Mill, "Of the Four Methods of Experimental Inquiry."

Part II: Democratic Political Institutions

- April 13 How do different electoral systems produce different party systems?
McCormick, part 1 (headnote)
Economist, "Survey of Italy"
Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, pp. 206–28 and 245–55 only.
April 15 How to analyze data and write a paper (I)
Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*, all.

First paper topic assigned

- April 20 Why aren't Presidents the same as Prime Ministers?
Juan Linz "The Perils of Presidentialism."
Donald Horowitz, "Comparing Democratic Systems."
Juan Linz, "The Virtues of Parliamentarism."
Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart, "Introduction" to
Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America.
April 22 What difference does it make if there are lots of parties?
McCormick, ch. 2 (Japan)
Economist, "Survey of Japan"
Economist, "Survey of Germany"
April 27 How do politicians control bureaucrats?
Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," excerpts.
McCormick, ch. 1 (Britain)

First papers due

- April 29 In-class mid-term examination

Part III: Political and Economic Development

- May 4 Does economic development lead to political development?
McCormick, Part IV (headnote)
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party."
May 6 Why are rich countries democratic and poor countries authoritarian?
McCormick, ch. 7 (Nigeria)
Aristotle, *On Government*, ch. XI.

- May 11 How to analyze data and write a paper (II)
Edward Tufte, "Introduction to Data Analysis."
"The Art of Recovering Information From Data."
- Second paper topics assigned
- May 13 How do governments help keep countries poor?
McCormick, chs. 5 and 6 (Mexico and India)
Robert Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*, chs. 1 and 5.
- May 18 Why and how have the NICs succeeded in developing?
McCormick, Part III (headnote)
Economist, "Survey of India."
- May 20 Why do some modernizing countries become anti-modern?
McCormick, Part V, including ch. 8 (Egypt)
Economist, "Survey of Iran."

Second papers due

Part IV: Post-Communist Regimes

- May 25 How do authoritarian regimes become (and stay) democratic?
McCormick, part II (headnote)
- May 27 Why is communist China's economy doing better than democratic Russia's?
McCormick, chs. 3 and 4 (Russia and China)
Economist, "Survey of Russia" and "Survey of China."

Part V: Public Policies in Democratic Countries

- June 1 Why do some countries have large welfare states and can governments eradicate poverty?
Economist, "Survey of Social Insurance."
- June 3 How do governments help industry and is interfering in the market successful?
- June 8 Can governments retain sovereignty in a global economy?
Economist, "Survey of the World Economy."
- June 10 Concluding lecture: What have we learned?

Final Examination, Fri. June 18, 3-6 pm