

Introduction to Comparative Politics
(in Social Justice Perspective)
Politics 1
Fall 2011

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MWF, 9:10-10:10am, DANTE 120
Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30, W 2-3:00pm
AND by appointment

Nature of the Course

Comparative politics denotes both an area of study (politics of countries outside the US) and a methodology. Traditionally this subfield of politics explores and compares empirical political processes in different countries and regions of the world in order to explain political outcomes. This course covers three major arenas of politics: political institutions (regime type, branches of government, state agencies), behavior (elections and voting, political culture, group representation, political parties), and public policy making (processes, major trends).

Social justice refers to the normative issue of creating a society that is just and fair, meaning that all individuals are secured minimal level of equal respect and concern along with the opportunity to pursue their best chances at life. The lens of social justice invites us to think critically about politics not just in terms of what happens, but what should happen. As politics in modern nations is essentially an exercise in which a very small political elite rule over the masses, the question of social justice appropriately arises to question how political elites gain power, in whose interest they rule, and the effect of their rule on the average citizen or resident.

This course is geared toward students considering a politics major and for students in other departments who would like to know more about political processes in other countries. The course does not cover the fundamentals of the U.S. political system (covered in Politics 2), but we will often compare other political systems to our common knowledge of U.S. politics.

During the semester we will concentrate on **three major goals**. First, we will learn to use the basic tools of comparative political analysis, including conceptualizing variables, developing hypotheses, testing theories, and employing sound research designs. We examine major theories of political development (modernization, dependency, democratization, populism, clientelism) and the ever growing interplay between outside and internal forces that shape domestic politics. Throughout this process, we must remain mindful of the limitations of comparison and the constraints imposed by our own values, assumptions and experiences.

Second, we will explore different notions and theories of social justice that will help us make judgments about political processes and policies in different countries, especially in terms of how U.S. actions and policies affect outcomes in other countries.

Finally, we will use these tools to analyze and compare politics and government in five countries, including a western democracy (Great Britain), a non-western democracy (Japan), two emerging democracies (Mexico and Nigeria), and a post-communist state (Russia). It is important to recognize that we cannot hope to develop a thorough understanding of all these countries in only one semester. Our goal is to build a foundation so that you can investigate them in more detail on your own.

Some of the major questions we will address include the following: What is the relationship between a country's economic development and political system? How does economic policy affect the rate of growth, the distribution of income and ultimately the distribution of wealth? Which policies effectively reduce poverty? How do institutional structures affect the ability of citizens to overcome social stigma attached to race, gender, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, etc.? To what extent does political culture influence these political outcomes? What impact does the growing pace of globalization (in its many aspects) have on domestic politics throughout the world?

Student Disability Services

Student Disability Services extends reasonable and appropriate accommodations that take into account the context of the course and its essential elements, for individuals with qualifying disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Student Disability Services Coordinator at (925) 631-4164 to set up a confidential appointment to discuss accommodation guidelines and available services. Additional information regarding the services available may be found at the following address on the Saint Mary's website: <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/academic-advising-and-achievement/student-disability-services.html>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Knowledge Goals:

1. Understand the differences and similarities of general patterns of politics in other countries including institutional designs, systems of representation, political culture and beliefs, and political behavior.
2. Understand the major theories of political development and apply them to specific cases.
3. Understand the major political challenges in several other countries, especially from a social justice perspective, including the impact of institutional reforms, international challenges, and key domestic issues of public policymaking.
4. Understand how key aspects of economic, social, and cultural development find expression in and shape the political arena in other countries.

Skills Goals:

1. Foment critical thinking through evaluative reading, classroom discussions, and a written critique exercise.
2. Enhance research skills through a written project on a topic that addresses a key social justice concern in a country of the student's choosing.
3. Increase interpersonal communication and public speaking skills through several small group in-class activities.

Value Goals:

1. Gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the causes of social inequities and domestic struggle for social justice and human rights in other countries.
2. Gain an appreciation for the political challenges faced by citizens and leaders in other countries that are different from our own experience of politics.
3. Evaluate the value and fairness of U.S. actions in the world with respect to how they affect the internal political dynamics of other countries.

REQUIRED TEXTS

McCormick, John. *Comparative Politics in Transition*, 6th edition. (Thomson Publishers, 2009) ISBN: 978-0-495-56852-0

Kesselman, Mark. *Readings in Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*, 2nd edition (Wadsworth Publishers, 2010) 978-0-495-80803-9.

In addition to these texts, I will assign supplementary readings. As important events occur in the countries we study, I may alter or assign additional readings. Reading assignment changes will be announced well in advance in class and will also be listed on Moodle and/or eRes for this course.

A few key websites that are very useful for this course include the following:

Rulers of the World (www.rulers.org), Freedom House's Survey of Freedom in the World (www.freedomhouse.org), Transparency International's index of corruption (www.ti.org), Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org), CIA's World Factbook (www.cia.gov).

REQUIRED COURSE WORK AND GRADING

1. Read and Think. Complete all the reading assignments thoroughly and on time. You are responsible for all reading, including reserve materials. Reading assignments should be done in a thoughtful manner. Read critically and decide for yourself where you may agree or disagree with the author. Bring your questions with you to class and present them to the class. To make sure you are reading I usually give surprise reading quizzes for which there is no make-up.

2. Participate. The course will combine lectures with class and small group discussions. My philosophy on class participation is that quality is more important than quantity, but be sure you contribute in class. **All students are expected to attend all scheduled classes**. I will keep an attendance record. If you must be absent for any reason please let me know. Your participation grade mostly depends on your active participation in class, however. I tend not to call on people, so make sure you come out of your shell if you are shy, or avoid dominating class discussion if you're an extrovert. (Remember—step up, step back). If you think of a thought-provoking question or comment after class, please feel free to email that to me or bring it up in the next class. This will also count toward your participation grade.
3. Exams. There will be one in class mid-term exam and a final exam. The final exam will not be cumulative. I provide a study guide for each exam.
4. Papers. On the writing assignments I stress quality over quantity. There are two short (4-6 page) papers, each with a distinct purpose. The first paper is an expository essay in which you investigate and describe some aspect of the politics of a foreign country that addresses an issue of social justice. The second paper is a critique of a scholarly article that you may choose from a list of possibilities. During the semester we will learn the basics of political science methodology so that you have the tools with which to evaluate another author's work. I will hand out a guideline for both paper assignments providing greater detail. NOTE: Late papers are penalized 1/3 grade per day including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.
5. Geography Quizzes: In order to make sure students are up to date on their political geography, we will have five map quizzes during the semester. The dates for these quizzes are listed on the syllabus. There will be one each on Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. If you aren't sure where the countries in the world are, now is a good time to learn. I provide a list of what you need to know for each quiz (it varies), and blank maps so that you can practice via Moodle.
6. Current Events (Life beyond the college bubble). Besides the text and other assigned reading, the final reading requirement is to keep up with major political events in other countries. While you have your options here, I strongly suggest you read a major newspaper (NY or LA Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.) or reputable weekly news magazine (e.g., The Economist) on a regular basis. At a minimum, you should read the weekly overview section of the NY Times every week. It is a fair summary of the news and is available free on line. The URL is www.nytimes.com.
7. Moodle. All students are automatically enrolled in Moodle for this course. This allows me ample communication with the class and students with each other outside of class time. In addition, I will post any announcements or reading changes on Moodle. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to check Moodle for handouts you may have missed or reading changes.

Grading

participation: 15%
 Geography quizzes: 15%
 papers: 30% (15% each)
 mid-term exam: 20%
 final exam: 20%

Scale

93-100 = A
 92-90 = A-
 87-89 = B+
 83-86 = B
 80-82 = B-, etc.

NOTE: You must notify me at least 24 hours in advance if you cannot take a test or quiz, or need an extension on a paper. Only serious medical excuses or other rare circumstances will be considered. Unexcused absences from exams will result in a grade of F for that exam. Please be advised that computer or printer failure is not an acceptable excuse for a late paper. Back up your work on a separate internet server.

Honor Code "Your own work, your own words"

All work turned in for this class must be completed in accordance with the honor code, whether the student has personally signed it or not. On your honor, you pledge that the work you turn is your own work, written in your own words, and that you have not received any unauthorized help on assignments. Among other things, the honor code prohibits plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use or appropriation of someone else's ideas or words without proper citation, and presenting those words and ideas as one's own. Note that intention is not included as a part of this definition. Proper citation consists of two forms: 1) A direct quote citation includes the use of quotation marks for any three or more words in a row obtained directly from another source, and proper bibliographical information including page numbers. 2) A general idea citation includes proper bibliographical information, but often without page numbers. The basic standard you are applying here is the following: "Is what I have written my own words and ideas or do they belong to someone else?" If they belong to someone else, you **MUST** attribute those ideas or words to the proper source. If you have any questions on this matter, please see me or ask about it in class.

Course Schedule

Comparative Politics in Transition = CPT
Readings in Comparative Politics = Kesselman
Reserve Reading = RR

Week 1

8/29: Introduction to course and to each other
8/31: What makes it political? How do we study politics?
CPT, 1-31
Kesselman: Introduction (pages 1-9)
9/2: What is democracy?
Kesselman: 4.1 (Sen), 4.2 (Dahl), and 4.3 (Schmitter and Karl)

Week 2

9/5: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
9/7: What is social justice?
RR: Distributive Justice by Lamont and Favor
9/9: Social Justice Policies
TBA

Week 3

9/12: Democracy, Waves, and the End of History?
Kesselman: 1.1 (Fukuyama), 1.2 (Huntington)
9/14: Introduction to Liberal Democracies
CPT, 33-48, and review chapter 1 (on US)
QUIZ: Europe
9/16: Great Britain
CPT, 98-123, and 95-97 (on Executives)

Week 4

9/19: Great Britain
CPT, 123-130, 254-256 (on Electoral Systems)
9/21: Academic Research Day – Meet in Wildenrat Theater, 2nd Floor of Library
Paper #1 Assigned
9/23: Great Britain
CPT, 130-142

Week 5

9/26: Great Britain
Kesselman: 2.2 (Strange), 2.3 (Sassen)
9/28: European Union
EU Handout and visit "EU at a Glance" website http://europa.eu/abc/index_en.htm
9/30: Introduction to Japan
CPT, 148-172
QUIZ: Asia

Week 6

10/3: Japan
CPT, 172-194

10/5: Japan
Kesselman: 3.1 (Gourevitch), 3.2 (Coates)

Paper #1 Due (may hand in ahead of time)

10/7: Introduction to Communist & Post-Communist countries
CPT, 195-209

Week 7

10/10: Marxist Theory
RR: Stephens (Chapter 2 of *The Transition to Socialism*)

10/12: **Mid-semester In-Class Exam**

10/14: Fall Break – NO CLASS

Week 8

10/17: Politics: art or science? Fundamentals of methodology in political science
Paper #2 Assigned

10/19: Introduction to Russia
CPT, 210-234

10/21: Russia
CPT, 234-253

Week 9

10/24: Russia
Kesselman: 1.3 (Gat), 2.4 (Levitsky and Way)

10/26: Introduction to New Democracies
CPT, 305-320

10/28: Mexico
CPT, 322-347

QUIZ: Latin America

Week 10

10/31: Mexico
CPT, 347-367

11/2: Mexico
Kesselman: 4.4 (Linz and Stepan), 6.1 (Linz)

11/4: Mexico and the Drug War
RR: TBA

Week 11

11/7: Introduction to LDCs
CPT, 417-432

11/9: Modernization Theory
RR: Walt Rostow (1960)

11/11 Dependency Theory
RR: Andre Gunter Frank (1967)

Week 12

11/14: Globalization and Development
Kesselman: 3.5 (Ross and Chan), 3.6 (Stiglitz)

11/16 Introduction to Nigeria
CPT, 434-460
Kesselman: 5.5 (Connor)

QUIZ: Africa

11/18: Nigeria
CPT, 460-480

Week 13

11/21: Nigeria

Kesselman: 6.4 (Hale), 6.5 (Reilly)

Paper #2 due

11/23: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

11/25: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

Week 14

11/28: Women and Politics

RR: Hunt & TBA

11/30: Race and Politics

Kesselman: 2.1 (Marx), 5.3 (Winant)

12/2: Cultural Challenges

Kesselman: 1.4 (Huntington), (5.2 Behabib)

QUIZ: Middle East

Week 15:

12/5: Strength of Democratic Institutions

Kesselman: 4.6 (O'Donnell), 7.5 (Zakaria)

12/7: Democratic Capitalism and Social Trust

Kesselman: 7.1 (Przeworski and Wallerstein), 7.3 (Putnam)

12/9: What to do?

Kesselman: 7.6 (McKibben), 7.7 (Sachs)

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 14, 9-11 am

You must bring a blue book for the final exam.