POSC 120 Comparative Political Regimes

Preliminary Syllabus - Fall 2001

Professor: Kanishkan (Kani) Sathasivam	Office: Willis 404
Phone: x4116 (office) Email: ksathasi@carleton.edu	Office Hours: 1:40 - 4:00 PM on Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00 - 11:30 AM on Tuesdays 2:10 - 4:00 PM on Fridays

Course Description & Objectives:

This course is an introduction to the comparative study of government and politics. It is designed to precede the student's subsequent comparative study of government and politics within specific regions and individual countries of the world. The course's objectives are (i) to demonstrate the logic of comparative analysis; (ii) to introduce the student to the basic concepts and building blocks by which we identify patterns of government and political behavior across the various political systems of the world; and (iii) to provide an appreciation for the benefits that follow from a comparative approach to the study of politics and government. Fundamentally, the comparative study of politics is essential if the student is to gain an understanding of the theory-building process in the study of politics and government.

Simply understanding the logic and structure of institutions and the patterns of political behavior within individual countries is insufficient in the world of today. Reliance on the concept of the nation-state as an organizing concept of politics is itself tenuous. Indeed, the nation-state as an organizing principle of power in the world today is under assault from the forces of globalization. Furthermore, the democratization process and the spread of market economies across the globe bring with them particular changes that compound existing domestic pressures and challenge extant institutional structures within countries. Students of comparative politics are in a unique position to explain why and how these various changes and pressures may work to transform the landscape of politics across the globe, within specific regions, and in individual countries. A good understanding of these transnational pressures and challenges is essential in order to fully appreciate the utility and relevance of the various institutional aspects of modern society.

Course Requirements, Policies, & Grading:

There will be **four** sets of similar assignments for this course, centered on each of the four 'debate & discussion' sessions scheduled within this syllabus (see below). Each of the four assignments will contain **two parts**: (i) **active participation in the 'debate & discussion' session**, and (ii) submission of a **short essay** a week thereafter. The specific topic(s)/question(s) to be debated in class will be given to you in a handout on the Monday prior to each session day.

For the written part of each assignment, you must first **derive a simple hypothesis** of interest to you from the course readings associated with that assignment. Once you have your hypothesis, use chapter 4 of MJS as a guide to **critically think about and discuss the hypothesis** in an essay of no more than about five pages (see writing format instructions below).

Provide evidence from at least three country cases drawn from two or more separate regions of the world to bolster your arguments and conclusions. I strongly encourage you to use the eleven country cases presented in MJS as starting-points for your case research. In fact, you should strive to become an 'expert' on three countries of your choice (choosing from among the 11 profiled in MJS, plus four others'see below) over the course of the term by researching the political systems, structures, institutions, and practices of those countries. ***Always feel free to come to me seeking help with any of your research efforts or with any other aspect of the course***.

Acceptable country cases: **Europe** - UK, France, Germany, Russia; **The Middle East** - Israel, Egypt, Iran; **Asia** - China, Japan, India; **Sub-Saharan Africa** - Nigeria, South Africa; **Latin America** - Mexico, Brazil, Argentina.

Although you may use a hypothesis from one of the hypothesis testing exercises in MJS for any of these assignments, **the grade for the essay will take into consideration the extent to which you work to produce your own**

hypotheses. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to **discuss your prospective hypothesis with me before you begin your work on the essay**. If you choose to use one of MJS's hypotheses, make sure to keep in mind that simply borrowing supporting material directly from the relevant MJS exercise(s) will definitely lead to a poor grade (and may even constitute plagiarism). **Note:** *To receive any grade above a B-, you must produce a thoughtful, comprehensive, and well-written essay that borrows ideas and arguments from* ***all*** *of the assigned readings* ***as well as from relevant "outside" source material*** *to critically analyze the subject.*

Writing format instructions: All written submissions must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-pt. font, and with 1" page margins; with within-text citations (author year, page) and footnotes or endnotes (choose one) if necessary; and with a complete bibliography. They must generally follow the standards established in commonly accepted academic writing style manuals.

Always keep in mind that the reading assignments listed (see below) for the course are a part of the course requirements. **Active participation in all class discussions** is expected. In addition, a **good class attendance record** is also expected through the entire course.

Grades will be based on the following distribution scheme:

Essay part of assignments I, II, III, and IV: 15%, 20%, 20%, and 25%, respectively.

Active contribution to the "debate & discussion" part of assignments I, II, III, and IV: 5% per assignment.

95 -100 % A	76 - 80 % C+
91 - 94 % A-	71 - 75 % C
88 - 90 % B+	66 - 70 % C-
84 - 87 % B	51 - 65 % D
81 - 83 % B-	0 - 50 % F

All students are expected to maintain **the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity**. Any act of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean. For further information, see Carleton College's *Academic Honesty in the Writing of Essays and Other Papers* and the section on "academic honesty" in *Academic Regulations and Procedures, 2001-02*. Both are available in Laird 140.

Special needs: Students requiring access to learning tools or special schedules approved by Student Support Services should contact me at the beginning of the course.

Reading Assignments:

You are expected to keep up with the reading assignments as we go through the term, which means that **you are supposed to read each assignment before the corresponding class period**. The class lectures and discussions are meant to build upon the assigned reading material.

The following three required texts are available for sale at the college bookstore:

[1] Sodaro, Michael J. 2001. *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*. 1st ed. McGraw-Hill. [MJS henceforth.]

[2] Blondel, Jean. 1995. *Comparative Government: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall. [JB henceforth.]

[3] Brown, Bernard E. (ed.). 2000. *Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings*. 9th ed. Harcourt. [BEB henceforth.]

M 9/10 - Introduction to the course.

Part 1:

W 9/12 - What is comparative politics?: JB 1; MJS 1.

F 9/14 - What is comparative politics (cont.)?: MJS 2; BEB 1.

M 9/17 - Critical thinking about comparative politics: MJS 3 & 4.

Part 2:

W 9/19 - The political system: JB 2 & 3.

F 9/21 - Political development and modernization: JB 4; BEB 2.

M 9/24 - Political authority and legitimacy: MJS 5; JB 5; BEB 3.

W 9/26 - The state and the nation-state: MJS 6 & 7; BEB 4.

F 9/28 - **Debate & discussion session I.**

Part 3:

M 10/1 - Constitutions and types of states: JB 13 & 14.

W 10/3 - Legislatures and executives: JB 15 & 16.

F 10/5 - No class.

M 10/8 - Democracy: MJS 8 & 9; BEB 5.

Essay I is due in class.

W 10/10 - Democratic transitions: MJS 10; BEB 7.

F 10/12 - **Debate & discussion session II.**

M 10/15 - Midterm break.

Part 4:

W 10/17 - Political culture: MJS 12.

F 10/19 - Ideology: MJS 13; BEB 6.

Essay II is due in class.

M 10/22 - Social bases, groups, and political systems: JB 6 & 7; BEB 8.

W 10/24 - Political communication and the media: JB 8.

F 10/26 - **Debate & discussion session III.**

Part 5:

M 10/29 - People, politics, and political parties: MJS 11; JB 9.

W 10/31 - Party systems and elections: JB 10 & 11.

F 11/2 - Party politics in the world today: JB 12; BEB 9.

Essay III is due in class.

M 11/5 - The policy process and governance: JB 21; BEB 10.

W 11/7 - Government and political performance: JB 22; BEB 11.

F 11/9 - **Debate & discussion session IV.**

Part 6:

M 11/12 - Political economy and the politics of development: MJS 14 & 15.

W 11/14 - Course wrap-up and evaluation.

Essay IV is due in my office by 5 PM.