Comparative Political Regimes

POSC 120 – Spring 2015
(M & W 8:30-9:40 am)
(F 8:30-9:30 am) Willis 205

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Course Description

Is Russia a democracy? How do politics differ in Western Europe compared to the United States? Why did the Arab Spring occur in 2011 and not 1990? This course will explore these and other questions examining politics within different countries. The comparison of political institutions and behavior within different countries is referred to as Comparative Politics, a subfield of political science distinct from International Relations, which examines politics between countries.

In this course, we will explore the varieties of political institutions around the world, including both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Our examination of these institutions will always be theory driven – we will be looking to explain both the origins and implications of political institutions. Over the course of the term, you will learn to apply and investigate theories concerning the origins of democracy, how different political institutions (both formal and informal) influence factors such as ethnic conflict, economic development, political stability, and the provision of public goods such as environmental protection and education.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Classroom discussion and participation will be a critical component of our classes. To facilitate insightful and interesting discussions, you are required to complete the assigned readings before each class and contribute to class discussions. The reading load will be up to 150 to 200 pages per week. There is no required text for the course – all readings will be made available electronically on Moodle. I also encourage you to pay attention to current events around the world in the news, which we will discuss in class. I will occasionally email news articles analyzing current events which you will be responsible to read for class discussion.

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due at 11:59pm on the date indicated in the syllabus. Please email an electronic copy to me at kfreeze@carleton.edu. In addition to the electronic copy, please turn in a paper copy to myself by 12 noon the following day –
you can always turn in paper in my mailbox outside my office at 413 Willis. The paper copy needs to be an exact copy of the electronic paper – failure to do so will be considered a case of academic dishonesty and referred to the Dean’s Office.

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on the following:

- **Class Preparation and Attendance** 15%
- **2 Quantitative Analysis Projects (18% & 22% Each)** 40%
- **Constitutional Convention Project** 15%
- **Final Exam** 30%

**Class Preparation, Attendance and Participation - 15%**

Attendance and participation is required. In preparation for each class, you are expected to come to class having read and thought about the readings for the day. You are also required to submit at least one comment, question or criticism on the reading for the day to the discussion forum on Moodle. These will be due 1 hour PRIOR to the start of class time. Submitting an adequate question or comment to Moodle for each and every class session will receive an 85% for the electronic portion of your participation grade. If I feel that your comments have been particularly insightful/useful for the discussion, this percentage will increase. I will provide feedback on your electronic participation around midterm.

In addition, you are expected to be an active participant in class as well. Half of your participation grade will be determined by participation in class, and half by your electronic participation.

**Two Quantitative Analysis Projects - 40% (18% & 22% each)**

In these short quantitative projects, you will prepare a quantitative test of a theory that you have developed from the course readings. For this project, you will turn in a 4–5 page summary of the theory you have developed, as well as graphical output and quantitative output in which you test that theory. To simplify this process, I have prepared a large cross-national data set that you can use to test your theory, although you are certainly welcome to collect and analyze your own data if you wish. For the first paper, you will investigate the factors that make a country more likely to be a democracy. The first paper will be due April 22. The second paper will be due May 20, and you will investigate how different political institutions (democratic or authoritarian) influence some outcome (economic, social or otherwise).

In addition, you will also present your results for ONE of the projects above to the entire class. Your presentation will be worth an additional 4%. These presentations will be at the start of class, and will be no more than 10 minutes in length. I will randomly assign you to present on one of the dates (Apr. 24-May 6 or May 22-June 3).
If you wish, you are allowed ONE revision for each of the two quantitative papers. Any revisions are due one week after I turn the graded copy back to you and no late revisions will be accepted.

**Constitutional Convention Project - 15%**

On May 8 and May 11, we will hold a mock constitutional convention for a newly independent but ethnically divided country. As part of this convention, each of you will have an assigned role, and will attempt to achieve an end result in the convention which you view as being the most favorable to yourself. In preparation for the convention, you will prepare a short memo (2-3 pages) outlining your strategy and expectations for the convention. This memo will be due electronically by May 7, 11:59pm. 

Following the conclusion of the convention you will turn in a short memo (2-3 pages) detailing what you learned from the convention and whether or not your expectations were borne out. This memo will be electronically by May 13, 11:59pm. 5% of this grade will come from each of the memos, and 5% will come from your participation in the convention.

**Final Exam - 30%**

This will be a comprehensive final exam, self-scheduled during exam week. It will cover both factual and theoretical knowledge from the course.

**Course Policies**

**Grading Policies**

I will assign grades using the following scale : A (93.33), A- (90), B+ (86.67), B (83.33), B- (80), C+ (76.67), C (73.33), C- (70), D+ (66.67), D (63.33) D- (60) F (Below 60). I do not round your final grade up or down (so if you receive a 93.327, you will receive an A- for a final grade).

Here are several important details regarding my policy on course grades

1. I will not receive grade complaints if more than two weeks have passed after the assignment has been returned. Before I review your grade you must first:

   - Wait 24 hours.
   - Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
   - Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient–but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not to vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”
The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments are not tolerated. Your grade will be lowered 5 points for each day it is late (the exception is for the reading questions/comments, which will not be accepted if late). That is if the assignment is due on Wednesday and you complete it on Thursday, the highest grade you can make is 95. If you complete it on Friday, the highest grade possible will be a 90. And so forth.

3. The ONLY acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time ONLY if you communicate with me BEFORE the assignment is due and you provide DOCUMENTATION of the circumstance.

Electronics in Class Policy

You are welcome to bring digital equipment (laptop, ebook reader, etc.) to class. However, I expect you to be responsible in your use of electronic equipment: please avoid visiting social networking sites, or otherwise browsing the internet on sites unrelated to the course. Individuals who abuse this privilege will be asked to turn off their computer. Please turn off all cell phones during class. If I observe that your use of electronic equipment is distracting you in class, your in-class participation grade will suffer.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by fundamental standards of academic honesty. A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/. All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources!

Disability-Related Accomodations

It is the policy of Carleton College to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the 1st week of the semester), so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at http://apps.carleton.edu/disabilityservices/.
Course Schedule

Readings should be completed prior to class. I reserve the right to make changes to the course schedule. I will alert you to any changes made in class, via email, and I will post the updated syllabus on Moodle.

PART I: Concepts and Definitions

March 30: What is Comparative Politics?
  • Introduction to the course.

April 1: The Logic of Comparison

April 3: Developing and Testing Theories
  • Memo on Methods in Comparative Politics

April 6: Origins and Nature of the State
  • Tilly, War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.
  • Hobbes, Leviathan, Chapter 13.

April 8: Definitions of Democracy

PART II: Origins of Democracy

April 10: The Modernization Hypothesis

April 13: Economic Inequality and Democracy
April 15: Natural Resources and Democracy


April 17: Cultural Accounts of Democracy


April 20: Democratic Transitions


April 22: The Arab Spring


PART III: Varieties of Democracy

April 24: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Regimes


April 27: Electoral Systems

April 29: Social Cleavages and Party Systems

- Daniel Posner. The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi. *American Political Science Review*, 98(04):529–545, 2004

May 1: Veto Players


May 6: Democratic Accountability


May 8: Constitutional Convention

- No Readings

May 11: Constitutional Convention

- No Readings

PART IV: Outcomes of Varieties of Democracy

May 13: VoD and Fiscal Policy


May 15: VoD and Ethnic Conflict

- Video lecture for the class.
May 18: VoD and Democratic Survival

May 20: VoD and Political Participation

PART V: Varieties of Dictatorship
May 22: Monarchies and Personalistic Dictatorships

May 25: Military Dictatorships

May 27: Party Dictatorships and Electoral Authoritarianism

May 29: VoDict and Outcomes

PART VI: Outcomes of Democracy and Dictatorship
June 1: Democracy and Dictatorship and Economic Growth
June 3: Democracy and Dictatorship and Social Outcomes