POSC 120 Comparative Political Regimes

Preliminary Syllabus - Winter 2001

Professor: Kanishkan (Kani) Sathasivam
Office: Willis 404
Office Hours: Mon & Wed 1:40 - 4:00 PM, Tue 9:30 - 11:30 AM, Fri 2:10 - 3:30 PM
Phone: x4116 (office)
Email: ksathasi@carleton.edu

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 three primary requirements for this course: two short essays, and a major research paper that includes an annotated bibliography. All written submissions must be: typed, double-spaced, in 12pt 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.

Note: To receive any grade above a 'B,' a student must produce a thoughtful, comprehensive, and well-written essay/paper that borrows ideas and arguments from the assigned readings as well as from "outside" source material to critically analyze the subject.

The two short essays will essentially be "chapter reviews" of the Bernard E. Brown text, which is required reading. Each student must select any two chapters from this text (excluding chapter 1) and write a short essay (6-8 pages of text) based upon the material contained in each of the two chapters. Each essay must: (i) succinctly but thoroughly summarize the readings in the chapter in a synthesized format; (ii) critically analyze the arguments presented by the authors of the readings; and (iii) draw some general conclusions from these readings about the topic that is the focus of the chapter as a whole. Bringing in additional scholarship from "outside" sources that is directly relevant to the topical focus of the particular chapter is highly encouraged. The two "chapter review" essays may be turned in at any time during the course of the term, but no later than the last day of classes.
The research paper (~15 pages of text) will be concept or idea-specific and not country or region-specific. For example, "Comparing the Parliamentary Systems of Britain, Israel, and India" is an acceptable research paper topic; "The British Parliamentary System" is not an acceptable research paper topic. To ensure adequate cross-national comparison, use at least three (or more) countries that are particularly appropriate cases for your chosen topic of comparative study. This paper, which is due no later than the last day of classes, will be preceded by an annotated bibliography for the topic selected that must be turned in by the last day of classes before the midterm break. Students are strongly advised to discuss potential paper topics with me within the first two to three weeks of the term.

Active student participation in class discussions is expected, and will be the basis upon which the 'class participation' grade is decided. In addition to active class participation, a good class attendance record is also expected through the entire course.

Grades will be based on the following distribution scheme:

Short essay #1: 20 %
Short essay #2: 20 %
Research paper: 35 %
Research paper annotated bibliography: 15 %
Class participation: 10 %

95 -100 % A
91 - 94 % A-
88 - 90 % B+
84 - 87 % B
81 - 83 % B-
76 - 80 % C+
71 - 75 % C
66 - 70 % C-
51 - 65 % D
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, 2000-01. 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 at the bookstore:


**W 1/3** - Introduction to the course.

**SECTION I:**

Part 1: General framework and concepts.

- **F 1/5** - What is comparative analysis?: JB 1.
- **M 1/8** - Methods of comparison: BEB 1; TMM 1.
- **W 1/10** - The political system: JB 2 & 3; TMM 2.
- **F 1/12** - Political development: JB 4; TMM 3; BEB 2.
- **M 1/15** - Political legitimacy: JB 5; BEB 3 & 4.
- **W 1/17** - Political legitimacy (cont.): BEB 5, 6, & 7.

Part 2: Society and government.

- **F 1/19** - Social bases, groups, and political systems: JB 6 & 7; BEB 8.
- **M 1/22** - Political communication and the media: JB 8.

Part 3: Political parties and elections.

- **W 1/24** - Political parties and party systems: JB 9 & 10; BEB 9.
- **F 1/26** - Parties and elections: JB 11 & 12.

Part 4: Governmental structures.

- **W 1/31** - Legislatures and executives: JB 15 & 16; BEB 10(articles 35, 36, & 37 only).

Part 5: Implementation and control.

- **F 2/2** - Bureaucracies and courts: JB 18 & 20; BEB 10(article 38).

  **Research paper annotated bibliography is due.**

- **M 2/5** - Mid-term break.

- **W 2/7** - The policy process, government, and people: JB 21 & 22; BEB 11.

**SECTION II:**

Part 1: Western Europe.

- **F 2/9** - Political setting and patterns of rule: TMM 4 & 5.
- **M 2/12** - Problems and prospects: TMM 6.
Part 2: Eastern Europe.

W 2/14 - Political setting and patterns of rule: TMM 7 & 8.
F 2/16 - Problems and prospects: TMM 9.

Part 3: The Middle East.

M 2/19 - Political setting and patterns of rule: TMM 10 & 11.
W 2/21 - Problems and prospects: TMM 12.

Part 4: Asia.

M 2/26 - Problems and prospects: TMM 15.

Part 5: Sub-Saharan Africa.

W 2/28 - Political setting and patterns of rule: TMM 16 & 17.
F 3/2 - Problems and prospects: TMM 18.

Part 6: Latin America.

M 3/5 - Political setting and patterns of rule: TMM 19 & 20.
W 3/7 - Problems and prospects: TMM 21.
F 3/9 - Course wrap-up; course evaluation.

**Research paper and short essays are all due.**