Rutgers University  
Department of Political Science  

790-103 Introduction to Comparative Politics  

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 6:00-7:00 PM – Hickman Hall 514 (by appointment)  

Course Overview  
This course is an introduction to the comparative study of politics within nations. More specifically, it surveys the institutions of government and the development, or lack thereof, of democracy. In general, three overarching questions dominate the countries we will study:  

1. Why are some countries democratic and others are not?  
2. Why are some countries more democratic than others?  
3. How did countries get to where they are today?  

These may seem like vague questions, particularly for an introductory course but people do not simply “choose” to be democratic or non-democratic. Rather, historical circumstances and the interests of political elites shape political institutions to reflect certain interests to the larger population, and to the world. Thus, in addition to examining the politics of different countries around the world, we will also be looking at a more general triad relationship between 1) Political Culture 2) Political Institutions, and 3) Political Economy.  

The course is divided into three parts, though all will overlap and intersect. The first part will introduce students to a number of important conceptual and methodological issues of comparative analysis, the primary research method in comparative politics. We will discuss the classifications of political regimes, examine “empirical” and “normative” definitions of democracy, and consider the strengths and weaknesses of the comparative method.  

The second part of the course examines democratic country studies. We will cover three country cases: Great Britain, Germany, and India. Within these cases, we will explore major concepts such as representation of interests; parliamentary electoral representation; majoritarian and consensus democracy; accomplishments and setbacks of democratic transformation; and the state’s role in the economy.  

The third and final section synthesizes both theoretical approaches with additional country case studies, focusing on the issues of transition to democracy and stability of democratic regimes. We will cover three country cases: Venezuela, Russia, and China. Taking what we have learned from the previous two sections, we will examine why some countries become democracies while others do not, and why some non-democratic countries are more stable than others.  

All three sections will examine different structural and process-centered explanations including modernization theory, political culture, history and historical memory, and institutional designs on government.
Requirements

- One midterm examination (25 % of your grade), date: **October 22**
- One final examination (30% of your grade), date: **December 15 (8 – 11 PM, HCK 101)**
- One short analytical paper (25 % of your grade), date: **December 8**
- Participation (20 % of your grade). See section below on Participation requirements.

A Hybrid Course (of sorts)

While this course offers traditional in-class lectures, all other activities and requirements are located on our Sakai site, which will provide you 24/7 access to readings, discussions, additional sources of information, as well as periodic class updates. I assume you are all familiar navigating through these websites, but if you are having trouble logging in or finding the necessary materials, please contact me.

The website will be divided into Weeks as categorized in the syllabus, where you will be able to access your readings and assignments, and to post your thoughts and comments on either topics covered in lecture or what you picked up in the readings. Each Week begins 12:00 AM on Sunday and runs until 11:59 PM the following Saturday. It is within this time frame that students will be expected to read the assigned material, examine the online discussions and post a minimum of two comments per week as part of your Class Participation. These are weekly, per unit assignments and will be graded on that basis. You can certainly post messages in the discussion for a unit after the date that the unit ends if a threaded discussion is ongoing (and of course interesting!), but you **must** post a minimum of two when that is the current section.

While you are certainly welcome to be as active as possible, you do not need to respond to every discussion question. In some cases, there will be multiple discussion boards posted each week. You may reply to other students, to me, or you may choose to expand on one of your previous posts. But please remember to post at least twice a week to new topics! Please refer to the document “Grading Criteria for the Discussion Forum” online for more help in clarifying how posts should look.

Participation

**Class participation** is accumulated throughout the semester through active engagement. This includes successfully answering unannounced quizzes, actively participating in online discussions, and coming to office hours (if necessary). Additionally, you may earn participation credit in class provided I know you who are. Due to the large class size however, most participation will be done online. Each time a student “participates”, a point will be awarded, with a maximum of 20 to be earned by the end of the semester. Maintaining a consistent participation score is not only the easiest component of your grade to achieve, but it also ensures you are up to date with your readings and provides a good opportunity for writing strong research papers. Please see Sakai for a more detailed description of what Class Participation requires. Please see the evaluation criteria, both in this syllabus and online for what qualifies for a participation point.

**Attendance** is not related to participation. You can have a perfect attendance record but if you remain silent, you are not “participating”.

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**Short Paper**

Students are required to write a short paper (2,500 words) on a topic to be posted online on October 22. The paper is due **December 8**. No extensions will be given. All late papers will be marked down by one-third of a letter grade for each day past the due date. This includes weekends.

The paper requires no outside research. Rather, you are asked to engage with the theoretical readings and draw on country cases for illustration.

It is important that you present a clear argument and a broad range of evidence to back it up. Thus, rely on multiple sources (and acknowledge them in your footnotes). If you must use direct quotations, do so sparingly and with proper citation. A good paper usually requires several rounds of editing, so start early. Please consult me for any questions along the way. Please see the evaluation criteria both in the syllabus and online for how grades are reached.

**Midterm and Final Exams**

Both will be a series of short identification of terms followed by short essays (about two or three from a pool of five or six). The midterm will include all material from Parts I and II. The final exam will focus on Part III, but require you to draw comparative analyses from Parts I and II in order to successfully answer the questions.

Both exams will be in-class blue-book exams.

**Readings**

Chapters from the following book can be purchased at


Cengage publishing allows the student to download individual chapters relevant to the course, which greatly saves you money. The newest edition’s chapters can be purchased via direct download. The following chapters are required for you to download at $11.00 each. Conversely, you may also wish to purchase a used 5th edition (2010) on Amazon Marketplace for a considerably lower overall price, or rent the book from either Amazon or Cengage. I do not care how you come by the readings, so long as you obtain them and read them.

- eChapter 2: Britain
- eChapter 4: Germany
- eChapter 6: India
- eChapter 8: The Russian Federation
- eChapter 14: China

Additional readings are available on our website for download.
Policy Statements

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class. The student is responsible for obtaining any and all work missed. Excused absences will be given in the event of holidays of religious observance, serious conditions that require medical care, required attendance in court or other government bodies, and predetermined participation in intercollegiate athletic events. Students taking part in the latter should notify me with documentation before the dates they will not be in class. You are responsible for notifying me of your absences and you are responsible obtaining all missed work.

Four or more unexcused absences will affect your overall course grade. Each additional absence will result in participation points being deducted for every class missed. For the official University Attendance Policy, see http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/courses/registration-and-course-policies/attendance-and-cancellation-of-class.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity encompasses standards of honesty and truth. For the student this largely entails ensuring all work presented is their own with full credit being given to all sources and materials used and consulted in their projects. With the pervasiveness of the Internet and the ability of students to obtain material from an array of digitized sources, prevention of plagiarism is more important than ever. Cases of plagiarism are in clear violation of academic integrity and will be dealt with in accordance to the severity of the case. For a complete description of Rutgers’ Policy on Academic Integrity, its descriptions and penalties, see: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

Students with Disabilities: This course meets standard University policies and provisions with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy. Students with documented disabilities from the University who are in need of certain academic accommodations should notify me and their respective TA as soon as possible. Information on disability support can be found at http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Classroom Protocol: Laptops and other devices are permitted to take notes. However, class time should not be used to surf the web, text your friends, or do other work. I understand we live in an age of the Internet and paying attention to a live person instead of a small screen seems increasingly difficult, but please save the Facebooking for before or after class. I operate on a three strike policy.

- The first time I see you texting or surfing the web, I make a note
- The second time, I contact you privately
- The third time I tell you in public to put the phone away and deduct participation points
- All additional times result in additional points being taken off

Also, if you need to leave early, please let me know at the start of class and please let me know the reason for you having to leave early. If you’re just bored and would like to be elsewhere, it’s better to either not show up at all or drop the class.

Emailing: I almost always respond to emails within a 24 hour period. However, I will not answer any questions if the answer lies in the syllabus, so if you email me with something, you don’t hear from me in more than 24 hours but you know I’m alive, chances are the answer to your question is in here.
Learning Assessment Goal m:

Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization

Student is able to:

- satisfactorily discuss any theory about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, or other forms of social organization
- present a discussion of variations in perspective or theory in relation to the subject
- present a clear, detailed, and thorough analysis of several different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, or other forms of social organization
- present a discussion of the application of the theoretical approach to a particular case
- identify strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical approach, and discuss its application to a particular case
- attempt at creating an argument falls short of expectations
- include in the argument a logical flow of ideas from one point to another
- provide evidence from the readings or other sources

OUTSTANDING

Presents a clear and correct account of more than one relevant theory about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, or other forms of social organization. Identifies different possible theoretical approaches, and discusses their respective strengths and weaknesses. Little to no grammatical mistakes or errors in syntax. Organization of material has a logical flow from inquiry to hypothesis to investigation and finally to argument based on deductive reasoning. Use of readings and class notes is thorough and contributes to the student’s own reasoning. Paper is as close to the requested word limit as possible.

PARTICIPATION POINT AWARDED FOR:

Post clearly connects with a point raised in the lectures or derived from at least one of the assigned readings. Post raises material derived from class (as mentioned above) but also provides personal insight and thinking instead of simply repeating material verbatim.

PARTICIPATION POINT DENIED BECAUSE:

Post shows little to no connectivity with the topic question. Post does not move the discussion forward. Posts are short, undeveloped comments that don’t move the discussion forward. Participation points for short comments while others take more time to write out one’s thoughts and ideas.

GOOD

Presents a clear and correct account of more than one relevant theory about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, or other forms of social organization. Identifies different possible theoretical approaches, and discusses their respective strengths and weaknesses. Little to no grammatical mistakes or errors in syntax. Organization of material has a logical flow from inquiry to hypothesis to investigation and finally to argument based on deductive reasoning. Use of readings and class notes is thorough and contributes to the student’s own reasoning. Paper is as close to the requested word limit as possible.

PARTICIPATION POINT AWARDED FOR:

Post clearly connects with a point raised in the lectures or derived from at least one of the assigned readings. Post raises material derived from class (as mentioned above) but also provides personal insight and thinking instead of simply repeating material verbatim.

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Readings and Class Schedule

Part I: Methodology and Concepts

9/2: Course Introduction
Read the syllabus, familiarize yourself with class

9/3 – 9/10: Introduction: Comparative Politics in the Social Sciences
Kesselman et al, pp. 3 – 33 (skim)

Note: There is no class Tuesday September 8

Part II: Democratic States

9/15 – 9/17: Explaining Democratic Regimes

9/22 – 9/24: Case Study I: Great Britain
Kesselman et al, Chapter 2: pp. 35 – 87

9/29 – 10/1: Case Study II: Germany
Kesselman et al, Chapter 4: pp. 89 – 142

10/6 – 10/8: Case Study III: India
Kesselman et al, Chapter 6: pp. 143 – 192

Episode 6: The City of Tomorrow (1929- 1941)

10/22: Midterm Review

10/22 *** Midterm ***
Part III: The Non-Democracies

10/27 – 10/29: Introduction to Non-Democratic States

11/3 – 11/5: The Phenomena of Illiberal Democratic Movements

11/10 – 11/12: Case Study IV: Venezuela

11/17 – 11/19: Case Study V: Russia
Kessleman et al, Chapter 8:

11/25: Case Study VI: China
Kessleman et al, Chapter 14: pp. 193 – 250

11/24: *** No Class – Thanksgiving Break ***
Eat, drink, and be merry

12/1 – 12/3: Democratization and Political Culture
Recitation sections may include discussions of China from the previous week

12/8: End of Class and Final Exam Review

12/8: *** Paper due. ***

12/15: *** Final Exam*** 8:00 PM – 11 PM (Hickman 101)