Comparative Political Economy

Spring 2020

Course Number: 01:790:357                        Instructor: Xian Huang
Class Time: Mon & Thurs 12:35 PM - 1:55 PM       Office: 403 Hickman Hall
Classroom: Hickman 214                          Phone: (848) 932-9380
Office hours: by appointment                     Email: xian.huang@rutgers.edu

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the main theories of comparative political economy (CPE) and their explanations of variation of economic policies and outcomes. The survey of these theories is organized as a progression from micro- to macro-level explanations. We begin by examining the sources of political cleavages over various economic policies and the formation of political coalitions. Next, we explore a range of theories positing that differences in the organization of interest groups lead to systematic differences in economic outcomes. We examine how comparative political economists have studied the problem of ‘state capture’ by interest groups and its economic and political consequences. In the last part of the course, we apply these theories to a variety of issues, including financial development, taxation, the development of social welfare, and the political management of unemployment.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

• Acquire an understanding of the main CPE theories and topics;
• Appraise and apply the main CPE theories in developing an advanced understanding of government, politics or public affairs;
• Assess the comparative method and analysis in the political science literature;
• Compare political and economic development of some particular regions in the world.

Requirements

This is a course covering the key concepts and theoretical debates in a large sub-field in comparative politics. Students are expected to complete the required readings each week, attend the lectures, participate in class discussions and take careful notes. I will be aimed at helping you understand and evaluate challenging readings assigned in this course. When readings the class materials, you should locate the main argument, strengths, weaknesses, and other issues that are of concern. If there are certain questions or points
that you think we should specifically examine in class, mark them down and raise them in 
our class discussions.

There are two in-class presentations, one in Week 5 (topic: variety of capitalism) and the 
other in Week 11/12 (topic: social welfare). Students may be randomly selected by the 
instructor into groups for the presentations. The presentation slides should be uploaded to 
the course web-site on Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to the class on the 
selected country.

**Evaluation**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation:</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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<td>In-class presentation:</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam:</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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<td>Final essay:</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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Topics for the final essay will be posted at Sakai on April 30 and the essay is due on May 7.

The midterm exam will consist of identifications and essays. If you would like a review 
on effective writing for essay tests, I recommend this website: 
https://www.csbsju.edu/academic-advising/study-skills-guide/essay-exam.

**Reading Materials**

The textbook of this course is Clift, Ben. 2014. *Comparative Political Economy: States, 
Markets and Global Capitalism*. Palgrave Macmillan. It is available for purchase at the 
university bookstore; it can also be ordered from Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble 
(bn.com) where less expensive copies are often available.

For the other readings, articles (A) will be posted on Sakai; books (B) will be put on 
reserve at Douglass Library Course Reserve.

**Self-Reporting Absence Application**

Students are expected to attend ALL class meetings; if you expect to miss any class 
meeting, please use the University absence reporting website 
https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email 
is automatically sent to me.

**Academic Integrity**

In accordance with Rutgers University policy on Academic Integrity, you are expected to 
fully comply with the school’s policies. Please see: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu

**Students with Disabilities**
Students with disabilities who require accommodation should review the following statement from the Office of Disability Services (https://ods.rutgers.edu/).
COURSE OVERVIEW

PART I

Week 1 Overview
Week 2 Introduction to Comparative Political Economy

PART II

Week 3 Interests and preferences
Week 4 Organization of labor
Week 5 Organization of business
Week 6 Political coalitions: class or sector
Week 7 The state
Week 8 Midterm review and exam

PART III

Week 10 Financial development
Week 11 Social welfare (1)
Week 12 Social welfare (2)
Week 13 Unemployment
Week 14 Taxation
Week 15 Inequality
Week 16 Final review
TOPICS AND READINGS

PART 1: Introduction

Week 1 (1/23): Overview of the Course

Clift, pp.5-19.

Week 2 (1/27, 30): Introduction to Comparative Political Economy

Clift, Chapters 2 and 12.

PART 2: The Building Blocks: Preferences, Economic Interests and Institutions

Week 3 (2/3, 6): Preferences

Clift, Chapter 6 and pp.155-166.

Week 4 (2/10, 13): The organization of labor


Week 5 (2/17, 20): The organization of business

Clift, Chapters 9.


Week 6 (2/24, 27): Political coalitions - The relative importance of class and sector


Week 7 (3/2) CLASS CANCELLED

Week 7 (3/5): The state

Clift, Chapter 8.


Week 8 (3/9, 12): Midterm review and exam

Week 9 (3/16, 19): Spring Break-NO CLASS

PART 3: Explaining Variation in Economic Policies and Outcomes

Week 10 (3/23, 26): The political economy of financial development

Clift, Chapter 10.


Week 11 (3/30, 4/2): The political economy of social welfare (part 1)

Clift, Chapter 11.


Week 12 (4/6, 9): The political economy of social welfare (part 2)


Week 13 (4/13, 16): The political management of unemployment


**Week 14 (4/20, 23): The political economy of taxation**


**Week 15 (4/27, 30): The political economy of inequality**


Houle, Christian. 2018. "Does Economic Inequality Breed Political Inequality?" *Democratization* 25 (8):1500-1518. (A)

**Week 16 (5/4): Final review**