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PSC 520.01: Comparative Government

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This course has two elements. The first is a general introduction to the field of comparative politics from the perspective of theories and approaches. That is, how do scholars of the field study their subject? This will entail a review of selected articles and books. There will be two articles each week which should be read and summarized in a paper not to exceed nor be less than 750 words. These summaries are due on the dates indicated on the enclosed schedule. Book review assignments should be approximately five pages in length.

The second part of the course is a research paper focusing on some aspect of comparative public policy. This can be any subject from health care to law enforcement in any country other than the United States. This does not include foreign policy. The first step is to prepare a one-page prospectus indicating the nature of the topic and country. This should also include a title and an indication of the source material upon which the paper will be based. The prospectus is due September 20 but may be submitted earlier. The paper should be at least 5000 words in length exclusive of notes and bibliography. The paper is due no later than December 4 but may be submitted earlier.

Graduate studies presume seriousness of purpose and active participation in seminar discussion. Attendance is mandatory. Grades will be determined as follows:

Summaries  25%
Reports  25%
Discussion  25%
Paper  25%

9/4 Comparative Government and Political Science
Robert A Dahl, "Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW 1961 763-72

9/11 Systems Approach

9/18  Political Legitimacy and Authority

“States,” in Patrick O’Neill, Essentials of Comparative Politics, Ch. 2

9/25  Democratization


10/2  Authoritarianism

“Authoritarianism,” in O’Neill, Essentials of Comparative Politics, Ch. 5.


10/9  Political Parties and Groups

Gabriel Almond, et al. “Interest Aggregation and Political Parties,” Comparative Politics Today Ch. 5


10/16  Political Institutions


Gretechen Helmke, “Checks and Balances by other Means: Strategic Defections and Argentina’s Supreme Court in the 1990s,” Comparative Politics v. 35 #2, January 2003.

10/23  Corporatism


Alan Siaroff, “The Fate of Centrifugal Democracies,” Comparative Politics (April 2000), 43-60

10/30  Political Culture
Gabriel Almond, "The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept," Civic Culture Revisited Chapter 1, 1-37


11/6 Political Development


Ruth Lane, “Political Development: Its Rise, Decline, and Transformation,” The Art of Comparative Politics, Ch. 3

11/13 Dependency Theory

Tony Smith, "The Dependency Approach," in Wiarda, Direction in Comparative Politics 113-126

Peter Evans, “Dependent Development,” in Nikolaos Zahariadis, Theory, Case, and Method in Comparative Politics, 103-107

11/20 Civil Violence


Jessica Stern, “Who are the Terrorists?” The Ultimate Weapon 69-86