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PSC 120.01: Introduction to Comparative Government and Politics

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Course Description

Introduction to the cross-national and comparative study of contemporary political systems. Focus on structural/behavioral similarities and differences, common and diverse aspirations/struggles, globalization and local responses, and domestic-foreign linkages. Reference to major illustrative countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should understand patterns of governance and political trends around the world, be able to explain similarities and differences among key political institutions and the role of political culture, be familiar with different theoretical and analytical approaches to the comparative study of political systems, and be capable of interpreting current events based on sound conceptual understanding and empirical grounding. This course also is intended to provide the basic grounding for advanced study of comparative politics at the upper-division level and basis for life-long learning about other political systems and human concerns.

Required Texts


All other readings are on e-res. Password: psc120

Course Requirements

Students are expected to complete readings on schedule, to attend class regularly, and to participate in class discussions and debates. Assessment will be based on the following:

*Class participation* (including debates) = 10%

*Journal* = 15%

*First examination* = 25%

*Second examination* = 25%

*Third examination* = 25%

*Final examination* = 25%

Late journals will be penalized by the reduction of one-third of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B) and by an additional one-third for each scheduled class that passes without submission.
Course Outline and Reading Assignments

Part I: Overview
29, 31 Jan A. Comparing political systems
    *P, pp. 3-12, 35-36

3 Feb B. Forms of government; legislative and executive structures; political actors
    *P., pp. 13-27

5 Feb C. Political economy; development and underdevelopment
    *P, pp. 27-32, 44-45

7 Feb D. The global/local vortex
    *P, pp. 36-39
    *CP, #51, 35

Part II: Western Europe
10, 12 Feb A. Britain
    *P, pp. 51-52, 57-89
    *CP, pp. 2-5, #1,3,5

14, 19 Feb B. France
    *P, pp. 93-94, 101-132
    *CP, pp. 7-9, #10,11
    *S. Daley, “French See a Hero in War on McDomination” (1999)

21, 24 Feb C. Germany
    *P, pp. 137-138, 144-174
    *CP, pp. 5-7, #6,7,9

26 Feb First examination

28 Feb Debates 1, 2
    *CP, #21, 13

3 March D. EU, Euro, and the New Europe
    *P, pp. 39-44
    *CP, #25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

5 March Debates 3, 4

Part III: Russia and Central Asia
7, 10 Mar A. Russia
    *P, pp. 223-224, 231-264
    *CP, #36,37,38,39
12 March B. Tajikistan and Post-Soviet Central Asia

Part IV: The "South"

14, 17 Mar A. Colonial legacy; inequalities
*Life and Debt video (48 min)
**“Plight of World’s Economy” (2001)
**“Protectionism in a Global Age” (2001)
Poverty Complex video (24 min)
*K. Richburg, “Why is Africa Eating Asia’s Dust?”

19 March Second examination

21 March B. Ethnic conflicts
* Payne and Nassar, “Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict, and Conflict Resolution” (03)

31 March Debate 5

31 March, 2 April C. Military rule
*Rashid, “Pakistan on the Edge” (2002)

4 April D. Personal dictatorship
*Denoeux, “Iraq” (2000)

7 April E. Islam & Politics
*CP, #45
Islamic Wave video (VT1289) 50 minutes
*CP, #44
**“Iran’s President Wins a New Mandate to Promote Reform” (2001)
Debate 6

9 April F. Democratic transitions
*CP, #37, 39, 46

11 April Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Islam, Urey lecture hall 8 pm

14 April Debates 7, 8
*CP, #24

16 April Third examination

Part V: China

18, 21 Apr A. China’s political system
*P, pp. 269-307
*CP, #41, 42, 43
23 April  B. Democracy in China?
*R. Scalapino, “Will China Democratize?”
_Democracy in China: A Billion Small Voices_ video (30 minutes)

_You decide: The size and educational level of its population preclude the possibility of democracy in the China mainland in the foreseeable future._

25 April  C. Hong Kong

**Part VI: Mexico & Nigeria**

28 April  A. Mexico
*P, pp. 359-361, 368-399
*CP, #38
*“Fox Follows Up on Pledge of Diverse Mexican Cabinet” (2000)

30 April  B. Nigeria
*P, pp. 441-474
*CP, #40

2 May  Debate 9

**Part VII: Big questions of contemporary comparative politics**

5 May  A. Gender and politics
*CP, #16, 17, 18, 19
Debate 10
_You decide: Responsibility for peace making in war-torn countries should be turned over exclusively to women_

7 May  B. Democracy in comparative perspective
*CP, #20, 48
*A Third World Point of View on the [2000 U.S. Pres.] Election” (2000)
Debate 11

9 May  C. Global & comparative politics
_You decide 1: South-North migration, diversity, and multiculturalism are undermining social solidarity and national unity_
*CP, #52

_You decide 2: Globalism will trump localism/tribalism in the 21st Century_

_You decide 3: State sovereignty will survive globalization in the 21st Century_

14 May (3:20-5:20)  **Final Examination**