Introduction to Comparative Politics
Political Science 106
Lecturer Mark L. Schrad
Spring 2006

PS-106: Lecture #2: 4:00-5:15pm T Th,
147 Education
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Introduction:

Politicians, journalists, academics and lay-people make political comparisons on a daily basis, whether they acknowledge it or not. For example, in discussions of foreign policy and the perceived need to bring democracy to the Middle East, commentators are basing that core assumption on a comparison of the virtues of democracy over the drawbacks of dictatorship.

In order to make better comparisons and gain a better grasp on the issues that shape the world beyond our borders, we need to understand how history, culture, institutions, economics and interests shape politics in other lands. This course is designed to help us better understand concepts such as “democracy,” “liberty,” and “development” by observing and comparing how such seemingly abstract notions differ from country to country, and region to region.

To that end, we will explore in some depth the politics, history and economics associated with five different countries from various regions of the globe. We will begin by scrutinizing some basic elements of democracy and expanding upon our understanding of democracy in the American context by examining politics in Great Britain. We will then look at two authoritarian states—China and Iran. The final two countries—Russia and Nigeria—occupy a contentious middle ground between democracy and dictatorship. Additionally, in each case, we will look beyond the individual country and address broader regional challenges. Beyond simply describing the history and current political scene of each country, we will make a concerted effort to contrast them with one another, and possibly derive political lessons from one to enhance governance in another. Moreover, each country will provide inroads into some of the more relevant sub-fields of study within comparative politics—state formation, contentious politics, nationalism, totalitarianism and democratization, political institutions and constitutional engineering, political culture, comparative revolutions, and so forth.

Three particular themes of note will extend through virtually all five cases: 1) democracy, 2) economic structure and performance, and 3) challenges for the future. The history, functioning, promise and pitfalls of democracy will be a core concern, as states increasingly scrutinize the will of the people as the only legitimate basis for sovereignty. Economic policy and performance is heavily influenced by politics both domestically and internationally. How each state has shaped their economic policy is of crucial concern to comparative political scientists. Finally, each state faces a number of problems for the future—be they economic, political or social. While frequently concerned with various aspects of history, it is necessary for the comparativist to constantly consider these issues with an eye towards future political developments.
Assignments and Grading:

Grading will be based upon participation in section as well as three in-class assignments: two mid-term examinations (the form of which will be announced later), as well as a final examination. The grade breakdown is as follows:

Section participation: 15%
First mid-term exam: 20%
Second mid-term exam: 30%
Final exam: 35%

Section Participation

The TA (Cleo) will determine your section participation based upon classroom attendance and participation. It is necessary that you regularly attend both lecture and section. Missing a class does not exempt you from the materials covered on that day. You may want to exchange e-mail addresses with some of your classmates to get notes and other materials you might have missed. Just showing up to class will not ensure that you receive a satisfactory class participation grade. You will be expected to come to class having read all of the assigned readings for that week, and had time to think critically about them. Ensuring that everyone is familiar with the arguments put forth in the various readings is the minimum condition for developing an effective classroom environment.

Exams

The exams will be cumulative in that there will be a continuity of similar topics, concepts and perspectives throughout the class, but the focus of each exam will primarily concern the countries which immediately precede each exam. Lecture and discussion materials, as well as topics covered in the assigned readings—whether addressed directly in lecture—are all fair game for exam questions.

Note: Make-up exams will only be granted under extreme circumstances, resulting either from 1) genuine family emergencies, 2) travel associated with university obligations (academic or athletic), or 3) severe illness or injury. If you are traveling due to university obligations, you must inform us at least two weeks prior to the event. If you are genuinely ill or injured, you will need proper documentation from your physician. These regulations will be rigorously enforced!!!

Questions on Exams

Invariably throughout the semester, students have questions about the grade they received on a particular assignment that goes beyond the given comments on the paper or exam. If you feel that you did not deserve the grade you received on a given assignment, I am certainly open to discussing the matter. However, I will insist upon the following:

1) A 24-hour “cooling off” period. Please do not approach Cleo or me with questions about “why did I receive this grade” within 24-hours of having your assignment returned to you. This will allow you time to re-read the comments, and understand whatever shortcomings may be in question.

2) Come to office hours. Cleo and I will not discuss individual grades during, before or after either discussion section or lecture. Questions about grades will only be considered in face-to-face discussions with Cleo or myself. In the end, it is exceedingly rare that a grade will be altered—but if you can persuade me that the evaluation was in error, I am not opposed to re-evaluating the grade.
Readings:
The following books are available for purchase at the University Book Store on State Street, and inexpensive copies can be found online as well.


All remaining materials will be included in a course reading packet that will be available for purchase at StudentPrint at Memorial Union, as well as being available on electronic reserve through Helen C. White College Library.

Words of Advice:

**Keep up!**

Introduction to Comparative Politics is one of the more difficult courses for students to take, because it requires mastery not only of politics, but also history, sociology, economics, and even anthropology. Additionally, it requires an in-depth knowledge of each of the countries, and the various theoretical viewpoints associated with comparative politics. In short, there is a lot of information to be mastered here, so don’t fall behind in the readings. In fact, it is usually helpful to take notes on each of the assigned readings in addition to the lecture notes.

**Keep clean!**

Breaches of the University Code on Academic Integrity, such as cheating on exams and plagiarism are serious business. Not only are such activities contrary to your entire purpose in attending college and official university policy, I also consider such breaches a personal affront to me as both an instructor and a competent human being—so consider this your prior warning: if I discover blatant breaches of academic integrity, I will prosecute them to the fullest extent.

The penalties for breaches of the University Code on Academic Integrity are steep, and you should be aware of them: at a minimum, you will flunk the assignment, and the entire class. Moreover, you will be brought before an ethics review tribunal, where it will be recommended that you be suspended not only from UW—Madison, but the entire University of Wisconsin system. Note will be made of your transgressions in your UW file—which will be made known to any other university that you may look to enroll in. Needless to say, most universities would be reluctant to accept a known cheater or plagiarizer to their institutions, and many employers would be reluctant to hire someone with such marks in their file. So, long story short: don’t waste my time, don’t waste your time—just don’t do it.
Assigned Readings and Organization of the Course:

I. Introduction: Expanding Understandings of Politics and Democracy in Comparative Perspective

Tuesday, January 17: Introduction

Thursday, January 19: Origins of Democracy and the Modern Nation-State

Tuesday, January 24: Democracy and Comparative Politics
- *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-23.

Thursday, January 27: Putting the US in its Place: Varieties of Institutions

II. The United Kingdom

Tuesday, January 31:
- *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, Chapter 2, pp. 28-80.

Thursday, February 2: Economic Policy Shifts: Keynesianism to Thatcherism to “New Labour,” And the Apparent Rise of the “Presidential” Prime Minister
Tuesday, February 7: Social Capital in the US and UK

Thursday, February 9: Nationalism in the United Kingdom and the European Union

+ Review for exam.

Tuesday, February 14: Happy Valentine’s Day!

~~~First Mid-Term Examination~~~

III. China

Thursday, February 16:
- Introduction to Comparative Politics, Chapter 13, pp. 621-671.

Tuesday, February 21: From Totalitarianism to Authoritarianism

Thursday, February 23: Challenges of Liberalization and Globalization
- [Optional]

Tuesday, February 28: Regional Challenges in China and South Asia
- Friedman, Edward, “Is China a Success while India is a Failure?” (Manuscript)
IV. Iran

Thursday, March 2:
- *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, Chapter 12, pp. 573-618.

Tuesday, March 7: Monarchy, Revolution and Theocracy

Thursday, March 9: Reform?

Spring Break—No Class March 14 or 16!!!

Tuesday, March 21: Iran and the “Clash of Civilizations”
+ Review for exam.

Thursday, March 23:

~~~Second Mid-Term Examination~~~

V. Russia

Tuesday, March 28:
Thursday, March 30: Postcommunist “Virtual” Economies


Tuesday, April 4: Political Challenges of Demographic Crisis


Thursday, April 6: Beyond “Transitology”


Tuesday, April 11: The New “Revolutions”


VI. Nigeria

Thursday, April 13: (Passover)

- Introduction to Comparative Politics, Chapter 11, pp. 515-569.

Tuesday, April 18: Constructing Ethnicity in Weak States

Thursday, April 20: **Engineering National Unity**

Tuesday, April 25: **Obstacles to Liberty and Democracy**

Thursday, April 27: **Nigeria and Beyond: The East African Experience**

VII. **Where Do We Go From Here?**
Tuesday, May 2:

Thursday, May 4: **Wrap-up and Review**

*Note:* Students of American politics that would like to see an incorporation of the United States in comparative perspective would be advised to read Chapters 5 and 6 of Zakaria’s *Future of Freedom*, pp. 161-239.

*Final Exam: 5:05 p.m., Sunday, May 7, 2006*