

GVPT280
Introduction to Comparative Politics
Winter Term 2008

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Comparative politics is a major subfield of Political Science. By comparing politics in different states and societies, we gain insights about the general nature and important laws of politics at large. Comparative approaches enhance the ability of political scientists to explain what is happening, to predict what is going to happen, and to provide recommendations on how to deal with it.

This course will familiarize the students with methodological principles and fundamental concepts that are employed to make such comparisons meaningful and consistent. With that goal in mind, we will study major types of political institutions and regimes and learn to identify important actors of political systems and comparatively analyze their values, interests, and norms of behavior. This learning exercise will be based on extensive empirical information about the politics and societies of a diverse group of countries (including the UK, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, China and others). The course will be organized around a permeating theme of political modernity and development, which will incorporate a variety of subthemes such as democracy, identity, ideology, nationalism, regime change, democratization and political globalization.

READINGS

The main text for this course will be:

Jeffrey Kopstein and Mark Lichbach. *Comparative Politics. Interests, Identities and Institutions in a Changing Global Order*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2nd edition (2005).

Additionally, readings for specific classes will include some scholarly articles, all of which can be accessed on-line via Research Port of the UM Libraries. Assigned additional texts will also be made available via the course webpage in Electronic Reserves of the UM Libraries.

Also, students will learn to work with comparative politics on-line databases *Freedom in the World* and *Nations in Transit* (projects of the Freedom House) and *Polity IV* (a project of the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management). The databases and related reports can be reached on the respective websites: www.freedomhouse.org and www.cidcm.umd.edu.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Course grades will be determined by the students' success in fulfilling the following requirements, with their respective weights:

Weekly quizzes (10% each) -	30%
Attendance and participation -	20%
Home essay -	25%
In-class exam -	25%

The home essay will be an analytical paper involving use of comparative politics databases. It should demonstrate the students' ability to utilize conceptual frames gained from this course in their independent thinking, as well as their ability to understand and interpret analytical scores from respective databases. More specific guidelines and the choice of topics for the essay will be discussed in class.

CLASS SESSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

January 2, Wednesday

Introduction. Goals, tools, and operational concepts of comparative politics.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 1 and 2.

January 3, Thursday

Comparing political institutions, norms, identities, values, interests. Nations and states. Political modernity and paths of development.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 1 and 2.
Karol Soltan. *Constitutionalist Conception of Modernity*.
(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

January 7, Monday

Political regimes. Autocracies and democracies. Political transitions and regime change: revolution and reform paths.

Polity IV Database and Codebook
Freedom in the World database (country scores and survey methodology)
Karen Dawisha. *Electocracies and the Hobbesian Fishbowl of Postcommunist Politics*
(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

January 8, Tuesday

Parliamentary and presidential democracies. Political ramifications of electoral systems: modes of representation, contestation, participation. The British and the French models.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 3 and 4.
IFES website: www.ifes.org

January 9, Wednesday

Nationalism and regime types. Autocracies. Sultanistic regimes.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 5 and 6.
Ghia Nodia. *The Impact of Nationalism*.
Minxin Pei. *The Paradoxes of American Nationalism*.
(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

January 10, Thursday

Totalitarian regimes. Ideocratic dictatorships.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 5 and 7.
Vladimir Tismaneanu. *Understanding Radical Evil: Communism, Fascism and the Lessons of the 20th Century*.
(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

January 14, Monday

Institutional and cultural legacies of communism. Political culture and its impact on the shaping and performance of institutions.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 7 and 8.

Francis Fukuyama. *The Modernizing Imperative: the USSR as an Ordinary Country*.

Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Primacy of History and Culture*.

(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

January 15, Tuesday

Democratization “waves” of the 20th century. Hybrid regimes. Modernization challenges in “antimodern” societies.

Richard Rose. *Living in an Antimodern Society*.

Lilia Shevtsova. *Russia’s Hybrid Regime*.

(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

Nations in Transit database (country scores and reports).

On the Freedom House website www.freedomhouse.org

January 16, Wednesday

Corporatist state. Populist and patronage politics.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 9 and 10.

Fareed Zacharia. *The Rise of Illiberal Democracies*.

Thomas Carothers. *The End of Transition Paradigm?*

(UM Libraries Electronic Reserves).

January 17, Thursday

Globalization and the trends of regime change in the 21st century.

Kopstein and Lichbach, Chapters 11 and 12.

Larry Diamond. *Civic Communities and Predatory Societies*.

Countries at Crossroads database (selected country reports).

On the Freedom House website www.freedomhouse.org

January 21, Monday

Individual and group presentations. Concluding discussion and overall review.

January 22, Tuesday

Final examination.