PS119 Introduction to Comparative Politics

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann
Course Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:30-7:00 pm
***Please make sure to check the schedule below for extended and extra sessions***
Office Hours: By appointment
Email address: b.vormann@berlin.bard.edu

Course Description

Why and how do political systems differ from one another? Which processes have led to the formation of distinct political regimes? And how do these historical variations affect politics today? In addressing these questions in a wide set of contexts, this course provides an introduction to key theoretical approaches and concepts in the comparative study of politics. The focus will be on core topics in political development such as state and nation building, the role of the state in the economy, its relationship to civil society and processes of democratization. We will also look at different types of political regimes, electoral and party systems—and the ways in which they affect the structure, functioning, and social role of political institutions. We explore these topics from a comparative perspective in combining theoretical texts with case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand important topics in domestic politics, grasp the diversity of political systems and regimes, and analyze current political developments.

Requirements

Reading material (you must have your own copy of the edition with this ISBN!)
1. Class Reader (available at the library)

Class preparation
In preparation for class, read the texts thoughtfully and engage with their core argument. Take notes while reading and try to identify questions in advance: Why do the authors argue as they do? How do they raise and substantiate their claims? How does their line of argumentation relate to earlier readings and discussions in class?

Attendance
Attendance at ALL classes is expected, as regular attendance is essential to the success of this course. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will result in a reduction of the course grade by up to one grade step (e.g., B+ to B). There will be an attendance sheet for any session. Late arrival counts as an absence.
Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

**Oral**

- **Classroom Participation** 20% (of total grade)
  This seminar involves thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and working groups. This includes a persistent reflection on current events related to the course’s core themes. The classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to voice your arguments and comments. Please do not hesitate to address the seminar leader if you feel that this is not the case.

- **Case Study Presentation** 20%
  Each student will present one comparative case study for one of the subjects in sessions during weeks 7-8 or 11-13. For the most part, the core readings in these classes will focus on the case of the United States. The short presentations should compare other cases to that example. These comparisons should be interactive, engaging, and analytically insightful—and take no longer than 10-12 minutes.
  - Details will be discussed in class

**Written**

- **6 Response Papers (each 500 words), (6*5%)** 30%
  Each student is required to write 6 response papers (1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman) in Sessions during weeks 3-6. I expect a short abstract of the primary texts’ main tenets, an analysis that embeds the reading in earlier class discussions, and the articulation of one central synthetic question that engages the issues and debates addressed in the reading as a starting point for broader discussion.
  - Response papers need to be submitted in print by the beginning of the respective session.

- **In-Class Final Exam (ca. 2000 words):** 30%
  The final in-class exam will take place on December 18, 2018 during our regular time slot. Students will have to answer a series of questions on the materials discussed throughout the term; specific instructions will be given in class.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers (Student Handbook)
*“Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.”*
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 3</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Calhoun, <em>Dictionary of the Social Sciences</em>&lt;br&gt;Lowndes, <em>Theory and Methods</em>&lt;br&gt;Hague et al., <em>Comparative Government</em>&lt;br&gt;<em><strong>No Class Session</strong></em>&lt;br&gt;The Relevance of Comparative Politics&lt;br&gt;Caramani, <em>Comparative Politics</em>, 1-17&lt;br&gt;Rothstein, <em>Comparative Politics</em>, 19-34&lt;br&gt;Newton &amp; Van Deth, <em>Foundations</em></td>
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**Patterns of State Formation**

**States, Markets, Societies**

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**Response Papers**

*Note: *** indicates specific times for certain lectures or discussions.*
Government Institutions and Processes

7 Oct 15
Legislatures, Govt. and Bureaucracies
Kreppel, Comp. Pol., 117-135/ Müller, 136-154
Mayhew, Legislation / Katznelson, Politics of Power

8 Oct 22
No class

Case Studies

Fall break

Influencing the State

9 Nov 5
Inequality and Responsiveness
Gilens, Inequality and … Responsiveness
➤ Watch and discuss Martin Gilens talk in class

Political Parties and Interest Groups
Katz, Comparative Politics, 207-223
Caramani, Comparative Politics, 224-244
Vallely, Who Needs Political Parties?

GUEST LECTURE: CURD KNÜPFER
Media Polarization
Bennett, Changing Societies
Knüpfer, Diverging Projections of Reality

NO IN-CLASS MEETING
Prepare for next time:
Kriesi, Comparative Politics, 274-290
Mayer, Movements and Politics

Governance and its Limits

11 Nov 19
Federalism and Regionalization
Loughlin, Comparative Politics, 188-204
Bickerton & Gagnon, Comp. Pol., 260-273
Derthink, Enduring Features

Guest Lecture: HELMUT AUST
Regional Subnational Governments
Keating, Re-Thinking Sovereignty
Graefe, Pol. Econ. of Min. Nationalism

12 Nov 26
Global City Networks: The C40
Lee & Koski, Mitigating Global Warming

Urbanization in the Global South
Turok, Urbanization-Development Nexus
Sheppard, Globalizing Capitalism
Chen, China’s Model of Urban Growth

13 Dec 3
Multi-level Governance: The EU
Hix, Comparative Politics, 403-421
Matthijs & Blyth, When is it Rational

Globalization and the State
Sorensen, Comparative Politics, 422-436
Mazzucato, Value of Everything, Ch. 8

III. Outlook

14 Dec 10
The Crisis of Democracy
Burnell, Comparative Politics, 437-452
Brown, Neoliberalism’s Frankenstein

Conclusions

Final Exam (In-Class), December 18, 2018