

PS119 Introduction to Comparative Politics

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann
Course Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:30-7:00pm
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description

Why 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!)

- Class Reader (available at the library)
- Snyder, Timothy. 2017. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the 20th Century*. Penguin (ISBN 978-1847924889).

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. There will be an attendance sheet for every session. Each absence beyond two (that is more than two absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) will lead to the subtraction of 1 point from the overall final grade. Late arrival counts as an absence. If you miss more than 30 percent of the class you cannot pass.

Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2*10%)** **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** **30%**
Each student group will workshop **one comparative case study in the sessions during weeks 12 and 13.**
 - For your fellow students to prepare for the workshops, you will have to **post relevant reading material one week before the workshop takes place at the very latest**
 - The workshop itself will include a presentation element (no longer than 15 minutes)
 - In the workshop, you should work out the most important factors contributing to the respective crisis of liberal democracy in your case and compare that particular case to other scenarios we have encountered in the class.

Written

- **10 Response Papers (each ~500 words; 10*5%)** **50%**
Each student is required to write 10 response papers (1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman) on sessions of their choice (i.e., three responses in each section and one concluding response paper for the final session on May 9). Response papers should include 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. The *concluding response paper* will identify and discuss a common problem or theme across readings throughout the class and seek to link it to current developments in politics today.
 - Response papers need to be **submitted in print by the beginning of the respective session.**

Policy on Late Submission of Papers and Academic Integrity

Late submission will be downgraded by 5 points, and by an additional 5 points per extra week. After four weeks of the deadline the essay cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Schedule

Week Beginning	Tuesday	Thursday	Assignments
I. Introduction			
1 Jan 28	Concepts and Approaches Calhoun, <i>Dictionary of the Social Sciences</i> Hague et al., <i>Comparative Government</i>	The Comparative Method Ryan, <i>The Comparative Method</i> ***Select Case Study Group***	
II. Actors, Institutions and Processes			
NATIONS AND NATIONALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE			
2 Feb 4	Civic vs Ethnic Nationalism Renan, <i>What is a Nation?</i> Smith, <i>The Origins of Nations</i>	Nationalism by Necessity Gellner, <i>Nations and Nationalism</i>	Three Response Papers
3 Feb 11	<i>No class</i>	Identity as a Political Instrument Guibernau, <i>Belonging</i>	
4 Feb 18	Nationalism and Modernity Greenfeld, <i>Nationalism and Modernity</i>	The Role of Gender and Race McClintock, <i>No longer in a future haven</i>	
STATE FORMS AND FORMATIONS			
5 Feb 25	Why Nations Matter Calhoun, <i>Nations Matter</i>	States and Bureaucracy Wallerstein, <i>World-Systems Analysis</i>	Three Response Papers
6 March 4	Globalization and the State Dicken, <i>Global Shift</i>	State-Market Relations O'Neil, <i>Political Economy</i>	
7 March 11	Federalism and Regionalization Keating, <i>Re-Thinking Sovereignty</i> Graefe, <i>Pol. Econ. of Min. Nationalism</i>	Party Systems and Elections Katznelson, <i>The Politics of Power</i>	
8 March 18	Liberal Democracy Dahl, <i>On Democracy</i>	Authoritarian Rule Brooker, <i>Comparative Politics</i>	

DEMOCRATIZATION AND BACKSLIDING

9 March 25	Party Polarization Mickey et al., <i>Is America Still Safe for Democracy?</i>	Elections and Technocracy Mounk, <i>The Undemocratic Dilemma</i>
10 April 1	Civil Society and Discourses Brown, <i>Undoing the Demos</i>	The Media: Epistemic Crisis Benkler et al., <i>Network Propaganda</i>
11 April 8	Populism Müller, <i>What is Populism?</i>	Economic Arguments Vormann/Lammert, <i>Democracy in Crisis</i> (per email)

Three
Response
Papers

Spring Break

COMPARING CASES

12 April 22	Group 1 The EU in Crisis	Group 2 Russia and Eastern Europe
13 April 29	Group 3 India	Group 4 Brazil

III. Outlook

14
May 6

On Tyranny
Snyder, *On Tyranny*, Lessons 1-10

Conclusions
Snyder, *On Tyranny*, Lessons 11-20

Concluding
Response
Paper