

PS 119 Nation-States and Democracy

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann
Course Times: Wednesdays and Fridays
Office Hours: By appointment
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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

- Class Reader (available at the library)

Class preparation

In preparation for class, carefully read the assigned texts and actively engage with their core arguments. Take comprehensive notes during your reading and strive to anticipate questions such as: Why do the authors present their arguments in a particular manner? How do they introduce and support their claims? Consider how their line of reasoning connects with earlier readings and discussions in the class. This proactive approach will enhance your understanding and contribute to more meaningful participation in class discussions.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Every unexcused additional absence from a 90-min session lowers the overall participation grade by five percentage points.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2*15%)** **30%** (of total grade)

This seminar requires thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and working groups. This involves consistently reflecting on current events relevant to the course's core themes. The classroom is a safe space, and you should feel free to express your arguments and comments openly. Please do not hesitate to communicate with the seminar leader if you ever feel that this environment is not being maintained.

- **Case Study Presentations** **20%**

Each student will present their case studies, which are also the focus of the final paper, through concise and professional presentations. Each presentation is limited to no more than 15 minutes, with time strictly enforced. The emphasis will be on presenting the puzzle, research question, the main line of argumentation and potential conclusions.

Written

All assignments must be submitted per email attachment before the respective session, please use Times New Roman pt 12, 1.5-spaced. Make sure to use Chicago Style for your bibliography and in-text citation!

- **Extended Introduction (1,000 words, due March 22)** **20%**

The introduction frames the puzzle and research question. It embeds them in existing literature, describes the empirical material and how it will be analyzed, and presents the (tentative) main line of argumentation in broad strokes. What have other authors argued about your theme? What are your hypotheses? Which data will you look at to make your case?

- **Final Essay (4,000 words, due May 17)** **30%**

The final essay is due on May 17. It will consist of an introduction, main body (that develops and substantiates your argument), and a conclusion (as well as a bibliography). Use paragraphs and subheadings to clearly structure your text.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers and Academic Integrity

Written assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded by 5 percentage points. For every additional 24 hours, five additional points will be subtracted from the grade. The instructor will not accept essays that are more than 96 hours late. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

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 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Schedule

Week
Beginning

Wednesday

Friday

I. Comparing Modern States

1
Jan 29

What is Comparative Politics?
Calhoun, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*
Hague, *Theoretical Approaches*
Please watch Pappas, [The Rise of Modern Populism](#)

Comparing Cases
Della Porta, *Comparative Analysis*
Blyth & Hopkin, *Global Trumpism*
→ start thinking about cases in class!
[Handout 'Final Paper' & 'On Grading']

2
Feb 5

Modern State Formation
Hall, *Varieties of State Experience*
Manow & Ziblatt, *The Layered State*

Democratization
Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*
Huntington, *Democracy's Third Wave*

II. Democratizing the State

3
Feb 12

Democracy in Theory
Dahl, *On Democracy*

Separation of Powers
Newton & Van Deth, *Constitutions/ Presidential and Parliamentary Govt.*

4
Feb 19

Parties and Electoral Systems
Gallagher, *Elections and Referendums*
Katz, *Political Parties*

Federalism and Regionalization
Sonnicksen, *Federalism and Democracy*
Gagnon, *Multinational Federalism*

5
Feb 26

Democratization and Autocratization
Brooker, *Authoritarian Regimes*
Lührmann & Lindberg, *A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here*

From Puzzle to Intro and Lit Review
Workshop with
Jen Van der Heide
Gustafsson & Hagström, *What is the Point?*

III. Nations and Nationalism: Defining the Demos

6
March 4

Civic vs Ethnic Nationalism
Smith, *The Origins of Nations*
Brown, *Are There Good and Bad Nationalisms?*

State Holiday, no class

7
March 11

Identity as a Political Instrument
Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*
Watch [Aleida Assmann on Memory](#)

The Role of Gender and "Race"
Thomson, *Gender and Nationalism*
Watch [Benedict Anderson on Nationalism](#)

8
March 18
Do Nations (Still) Matter?
Calhoun, *Nations Matter*
Bhambra, *For a Reparatory Social Science*

Submit extended introduction

Is Populism Nationalism?
Brubaker, *Populism and Nationalism*

Spring Break March 25-April 1, 2024

IV. Illiberalism and Renationalization

9
April 1
What is Populism?
Müller, *What is Populism?*
Mudde, *The Populist Zeitgeist*

...and Illiberalism?

Laruelle, *Illiberalism: A Conceptual Introduction*

10
April 8
A Consequence of Neoliberalism?
Fraser, *Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump*
Please watch Brown, [Neoliberalism's Anti-democratic Stealth Revolution](#)

A Disagreement on Who Belongs?
Plattner, *Illiberal Democracy and the Struggle on the Right*
Scruton, *The Open Society from a Conservative Perspective*

11
April 15
A Long Term Dynamic?
Belew, *Bring the War Home*

Presentations
Workshop with Jen van der Heide

V. Democracies in Crisis: Case Study Workshops

11
Apr 22
The Americas

Asia

12
Apr 29
Africa

Europe and Russia

VI. How to Save Democracy? The Problem of Scale

13
May 6
Global Crises
Lopez-Carlos, *Challenges of the 21st Cent.*
Held, *The Overlapping Crises*

Fixing National Systems
Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*
Atanassow, *Tocqueville's Dilemma's & Ours*

14
May 13
Cosmopolitan Hopes and Limits
Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens*
Mouffe, *Democracy, Human rights, and Cosmopolitanism*

FINAL ESSAY DUE

The Local Scale
Please watch Barber, [Why Mayors Should Rule the World](#)