ICIR 102 Approaches to Comparative Politics

Course Description & Aims:
This lecture-based course seeks to explore and compare various forms of political systems in theory, principle and practice. Most importantly, the course main goal is to probe different political systems such as in democracies, communism, monarchy, military dictatorship, and other systems in an analytical and comparative manner. Furthermore, understanding forms of representation, party political systems, elections and decision making in the context of the different systems. The working of the executive, legislative and judicial aspect of government and their inter-relationship.

Comparative Political Systems course introduces students to an extraordinary breadth of content and depth of contextualization. This course aims to give a practical examination of modern day political systems. The focus shall be on political structures, historical context, political culture, legal constructs and how these components have coalesced into contemporary frameworks that govern nation state behavior internally and externally. Students will be required to apply theories of political organization, legal mechanisms and social theory in a comparative fashion. Various nation states will be analyzed contrasting developed and developing nation political structures and value systems in order to derive a broad understanding of contemporary politics in the modern world.

Various forms of political systems, both in theory, principle, and practice; political systems in stateless societies, traditional kingdoms and empires, absolutist states, democracies, and modern “authoritarian” and militaristic states; various forms of representation, party-political systems, elections, and decision-making; the working of the executive, legislative, and judicial aspects of government and their interrelationships. Students will understand; examine; assess various forms of political systems, both in theory, principle and practice.

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Assessment
Ethics and participation 10%
Midterm examination 30%
Student presentation 30%
Final examination 30%

Course Learning Outcomes
At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Detail the culture and nature of political organization in contextual form
2. Outline contemporary issues in regard to political activity
3. Describe and analyze a nation’s political organization and how it has been derived
4. Compare cross national political systems in a methodological framework
5. Understand contemporary political organization, resource politics, developmental politics

Course Format: The design of this course is a combination of lectures, class participation, and discussion of readings. Course text will be provider in a reader pack form by lecturer.
### Assessment and Criteria

1. **Student ethics, Class Participation and Attendance – 15%**
   Students must attend participate in class discussion, and submit task on schedule.

2. **Midterm Exam – 30%**
   Students will be given a midterm examination comprised of medium length answer questions which will require students to draw on lectures, course readings and short personal research to answer questions.

3. **Presentation – 30%**
   Student/s (goal is 4 students per group but would depend on class size), individually will be given the option to choose a country in which to examine and analyzed according to criteria and method discussed in class content during the first half of the course. This individual task will account to 20% from total presentation grade. Since it’s also a group work, student/s have to compare their topics to at least two (2) countries political systems and how they diverge and/or converge in a contemporary context and how each country’s political systems/culture interact. Comparison has to be between the cases presented by each student within the group. The display of collaboration within groups will account to 10% from total presentation grade. Each presentation should be presented in PowerPoint format.

4. **Final Exam – 30%**
   Students will be given a final examination comprised of medium length answer questions which will require students to draw on lectures, course readings and short personal research to answer questions.

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Introduction to Comparative Politics

Topic description: This week students will be introduced to the course outline, course requirements, and students expected input. Basic concepts are defined - such as Politics, Power, Authority, Legitimacy, Sovereignty, Government and the State; importance of study outlined; and critical tensions within the study introduced.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand the development of Comparative Politics discipline, definitions central to the field and understanding of the pros and cons of cross-national comparative politics.

Readings and activities:

State Theories: Development and Modern states

Topic description: This week the state theories will be explored. Lectures start with theories on the development of the modern state by assessing the essential characteristic of states, the general patterns of historical origins and development of states, and its theoretical approaches. Then, moves on to the more critical studies of states focusing on theories of relationship between state and society. Lastly, Thailand’s state development will be assessed in order to provide a comprehensive case to state origins and development.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to be able to compare state theories on Origins, Formations, Development and able to associate these models to the development of Nation States.

Readings and activities:

State Theories: Democratic states

Topic description: A continuation on state theories will be explored, within the context of origins, formation and development of Democratic states. Two theories of Democratization process would be assessed between the (1) waves on rise of Democratic states and (2) Phases to Consolidation - in a comparative manner. Moreover, the theories would be adopted as a theoretical framework in analyzing the Limits and Potential of Liberal Democratization in Southeast Asia.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand a variety of models on Democratic development and theories. Hence able to apply as framework in comparing Liberal Democratic development among multiple states.

Readings and activities:
- States and democracy – Reading: Newton, K & Deth Van, J.W., Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World, (chapter 2).
- Patterns of Democracy Government: Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries – Reading: Lijphart, Arend. (Handout)
Setting Methodology in Analyzing Comparative Politics

**Topic description:** Week 4 assesses the minimal number of pillars needed to support the infrastructure of democracy. Therefore, adopted as conceptual framework in analyzing comparative politics by dividing the focus to seven main pillars of the architecture of democracy: elections, political tolerance, the rule of law, freedom of expression, accountability and transparency, decentralization, and civil society. Note, that despite pillars being architectures of democracy, such can also be concepts in assess none democratic tenets as well.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the different models on how pillars can be assessed - Interconnected or Developmental structures.

**Readings and activities:**
- Building the Pillars of Democracy – Reading: Panyarachun, Anand., Center for International Private Enterprise, 2008 (Handout)
- Activity – in-class discussion on the possible frameworks in assessing 7 Pillars of Democracy.
- Assessment – Student’s arguments, supporting data and participation in class discussion on suggested models and framework.

**Legitimacy and Election Systems**

**Topic description:** As a foundation for establishing a sovereign leader, different states adheres to a variety of source of legitimacy. This week, theories such as Divine Rights of Kings, Communist party’s representation of the working class, and Multi-party systems will be analyzed in a comparative manner supported with case study analysis. Moreover, focusing on Democratic votes and elections by examining Plurality - majority (Simple plurality / First past the post, Second ballot, and Alternative vote), Proportional representation (The list system, The single transferable vote, The mixed-member proportional system), and Semi PR (Parallel systems, and Single non-transferable vote). Lastly, is the assessment of Theories in voting, such as Sociological approaches: the Columbia school, Psychological approaches: the Michigan school, and Rational choice.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the basics of Legitimacy, Voting systems and Voting theories, hence able students to discover variety of specific context to compare within the category of legitimacy and election.

**Readings and activities:**
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Legitimacy and Election systems.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.

**Tolerance, Policies and Performance**

**Topic description:** Tolerance on both domestic and foreign policies will be explored by associating Political Ideologies such as Liberalism, Conservatism, Christian Democracy and Socialism to public policy formulation and decision making that complies with social acceptance and justice.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand different state policies that are accepted as Tolerant, and able to compare public from international policies, and among political ideologies. Ultimately, students are expected to be able to associate Ideologies with Policies.
Readings and activities:
- Activity – in-class discussion on Public policy formulation.
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Tolerance, Policies and Performance.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.

**Rule of Law and Polity - Structures and Institutions**

**Topic description:** This week topic assesses the main structure and institution of the state by exploring the Constitution and government structure. Firstly, written and unwritten constitution would be analyzed and compared. Then, move on the specific component of the constitution that identifies Powers (or separation of power). From this context, the two most prevalent configuration of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial are also assessed and compared. Lastly, the concepts explored would be supported with a case study comparing USA government system and England government system of government.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the workings of the Constitution and able to compare in detail the similarity and differences of Presidential and Parliamentary systems of government.

Readings and activities:
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Rule of Law and Polity.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.

**Centralization and Decentralization**

**Topic description:** This week’s topic embarks towards the assessment of vertical administration of society, from Community, Local, Municipal, Provincial, Regional, National to International. An emphasis to the Philippines case on ‘Barangays’, to provide a compelling case to Multi-level government in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the adherence of states to certain type of configuration such as Unitary and Federal systems are also compared and associated with Centralization and Decentralization theories. Countries such as France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland will be explored and compared to provide examples of Unitary and Federal systems.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the dichotomy or relationship between Centralization and Decentralization, and able to form their own perspective based on different models. Hence enable student not only to compare the different state system and its respective multi-level government but to compare theories and perspectives from different authors as well.
Readings and activities:
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Centralization and Decentralization.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.

**Accountability, Transparency and Polity**

**Topic description:** The 9th week, content returns to the assessment of Executive and Legislative branches of government in greater dept. The accountability and transparency of these branches are the main focus of task in determining context of comparison between checks and balances of the state that upholds government’s accountability and embraces Transparency. A case study on Philippine impeachment case against President Estrada and the national broadcasting of Senate committee hearings are to be used as support to this week’s agenda.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand accountability and transparency models and how these impact state responsibilities and the intersection between individuals and the state.

Readings and activities:
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Accountability, Transparency and Polity.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.

**Freedom of Thought and Speech**

**Topic description:** One of the most important foundation of a democratic state is the society’s ability to freely express one’s self, hence the week explores the concepts of Rights and Freedom - specifically Freedom of Speech and Expression. Documents such as Bill of Rights, The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizens, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are assessed. Countries such as England and Thailand adherence to free expression will be analyzed and compared. Lastly, an emphasis to Les Magistrate Law effects to Freedom of thought

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the historical and current issues surrounding the Human Rights based on free speech and expression.

Readings and activities:
- Freedom of speech – Reading: Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Covenant on civil and political rights.
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Freedom of Thought and Speech.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.
Civil Society, Citizens, Elites and Interest

**Topic description:** The final topic studies the Agency in Politics by conceptualizing citizens, elites, civil society and their interest. Among these players hold an array of theories regarding political attitudes and behaviors, such as Marxist, Elite and Rational-choice theories. These are interesting subject to explore and compare due to the ability of these entities to pressure the government and sometime induce a social movement. The umbrella movement in HongKong will be assessed to illustrate the process and links between citizens, attitudes/behavior, civil society, interest, and movements.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the importance of citizens in shaping the political sphere and able to contextualize the dichotomy between political attitudes and behavior.

**Readings and activities:**
- Political attitudes and behavior – Reading: Newton, K & Deth Van, J.W., Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World, (chapter 9).
- Pressure groups and social movements – Reading: Newton, K & Deth Van, J.W., Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World, (chapter 10).
- Activity – in-class student country study presentation and discussion on Civil society, citizens, elites and interest.
- Assessment – Choice and relevance of topic, presentation thesis statement, organization of ideas and content of supporting argument.

**The Future of Democratic States**

**Topic description:** With special emphasis to democratic states, the last week concludes by exploring ideas and theories on what states may develop to. A comparison between different timeline with the same state would be assessed in order to hypothetically determine the possible future of states.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to be able to adopt a framework in assessing comparative politics based on one state and offer predictions based on trends.

**Readings and activities:**