



ICIR 102 Approaches to Comparative Politics & Systems

Course Description & Aims:

This lecture-based course seeks to explore and compare various forms of political systems in theory, principle and practice. The course aims to evaluate different political systems such as democracies, hybrid and authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, the course seeks to describe different political phenomena, their origins and effects such as, forms of representation, political party systems, electoral systems, state organization and populism. The working of the executive, legislative and judicial aspect of government and their inter-relationship.

This course introduces students to an extraordinary breadth of content and depth of contextualization. This course aims to give a practical examination of contemporary 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.

Lecturer: William J. Jones

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Assessment

Speech analysis	10%
In class quizzes (10% x 4)	40%
Student presentation	20%
Comparative politics paper	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 a nation's political organization
4. Describe and compare cross national political systems in a methodological framework
5. Understand contemporary political organization and political phenomena

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

General Course Text:

- O'Neil, P. H. (2018). *Essentials of Comparative Politics* (6th ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Newton, K., & Deth, J. W. (2010). *Foundations of Comparative politics: Democracies of the Modern World* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Topic No.	Topic
1	Introduction to the course, expectations, outline
	How to compare an introduction, constitutionalism, constitutional theories
2	The nation and nationalisms
	The nation and nationalisms
3	State theories: Development of modern states
	State theories: Development of modern states
4	State organization: Federal, Unitary State, Devolution
	State organization: Federal, Unitary State, Devolution
5	Comparative ideologies
	Comparative ideologies
6	Democracy and democratization
	Democracy and democratization
7	Electoral and voting systems
	Electoral and voting systems
8	Ethnicity, conflict and politics
	Ethnicity, conflict and politics
9	Populism: Historical, Left & Right Wing
	Populism: Historical, Left & Right Wing
10	United States of America: Politics & Populism
	United States of America: Politics & Populism
11	United Kingdom: From Thatcher and Blair to Brexit
	United Kingdom: From Thatcher and Blair to Brexit
12	Group presentations
	Group presentations

Assessment and Criteria

1. Political Speech Analysis – 10%

Students will watch a political speech of an American presidential inauguration and describe both the narrative of the speaker and the substantive policy of the speech. The description paper should be between 500-1,000 words.

2. In class Quizzes – 3 x 10% = 30%

Students will be given two in class quizzes comprised of short to medium length answer questions which will require students to draw on lectures, course readings to answer questions.

3. Comparative Politics Paper – 20%

Students will write a term paper that descriptively compares two (2) countries political systems. The paper should be between 1,500-2,000 words and cover only one (1) to two (2) aspects of their chosen countries political systems e.g. comparative populism, comparative authoritarianism, comparative voting systems and outcomes. The paper should not attempt to cover both countries entire political system but instead focus on certain aspects which were covered in class lecturers, discussions and readings. The paper is due at the end of week 12 of term.

4. Presentation – 20%

Students individually will be given the option to choose a country in which to describe and according to criteria and method discussed in class. Presentations should be between 15-20 minutes in length and provide non-participants with enough information regarding their country that listeners can leave with a basic understanding of the country's political system and institutions. Each presentation should be presented in PowerPoint format.

5. Final Exam – 20%

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.

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. Constitutions and theories of constitutions for the state and social purposes.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand the development of Comparative Politics discipline, definitions central to the field. What does it mean to compare? How to compare different aspects of a nation's political system.

Readings and activities:

- **Newton, K., & Deth, J. W. (2009). *Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World* (2nd ed., pp. 1-10). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

The Nation and Nationalisms

Topic description: A general introduction to different types/forms of nationalisms. Civic, ethnic anationalisms will be explored. The primary thinkers who advanced studies of nationalism will be evaluated such as Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith, Ernest Gellner. Different schools of thought that explain the rise of nationalism and their contribution to building understandings of the nation. Theories of modernity, functionalism, ethno-symbolism and conflict will be explored.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to be able to understand different theories of nationalism as an explanation for how modern nation-states in Europe began to develop.

Readings and activities:

- **Poole, R. (1999). *Nation and Identity* (1st ed., pp. 8-39). New York: Routledge.**

Theories of the State: Development & Modern states

Topic description: This week the theories of the state 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.

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:

- **Newton, K., & Deth, J. W. (2009). *Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World* (2nd ed., pp. 13-33). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

Comparative Ideologies

Topic description: This module seeks to introduce students to major political ideologies from the enlightenment to present. Students are provided with an historical introduction to variations of political thought from the age of enlightenment to present highlighting the major paradigms of thought which are the basis of major streams of political ideologies. The basis and characteristics of different ideologies from different strains of Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Neoliberalism, Monarchy and how ideologies have different political, social and economic forms of organization.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand different the underpinnings and characteristics of different contemporary ideologies. How ideologies impact economic and social formations within states.

Readings and activities:

- Anonymous. (2018). Anti-Royalism in Thailand Since 2006: Ideological Shifts and Resistance. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(3), 363-394.
- **Schwarzmantel, J. (2008). Ideology and Politics (pp. 25-45). London: Sage.**
- Activity – students will complete an online test to find their own political leaning on ideology using the politicalcompass.org.

Democracy, Democratization & Social Capital

Topic description: This week explores different understandings of democracy from representative to semi-direct and their characteristics. The process of democratization as argued by Samuel Huntington and pillars of democracy. The role of social capital and trust within democratic political systems.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand the different types of democratic structures. For students to understand what democracy is, its forms and the process of democratization. The link between democracy and social capital as argued by Robert Putnam.

Readings and activities:

- **Huntington, S. P. (1991). Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), 12-34.**
- **Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (pp. 142-157). NY: Simon & Schuster.**
- Activity – students will complete Freedom House survey that ranks countries around the world as Free, Partly Free and Not Free to assess a country of their choosing.

Electoral and Voting Systems

Topic description: This module seeks to explore major voting systems which are used throughout the world in democratic countries. How voting takes place and how systems of voting affect voting outcomes are investigated. Lectures are divided into major typology of systems namely, proportional systems and majoritarian systems. Voting systems explored are single transferable vote, list proportional, multi-member proportional, first-past-post, alternative vote and two round voting. The effects that voting systems have on electoral participation, social cleavages and possible conflict.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand the basics of Legitimacy, Voting systems and the outcomes they tend to produce and how fractionalism and polarization can be aggravated by or ameliorated by a countries electoral system.

Readings and activities:

- Carter, E. (2004). Does PR Promote Political Extremism? Evidence from the West European Parties of the Extreme Right. *Representation*, 40(2), 82-100.
- **Norris, P. (2004). Classifying and evaluating electoral systems. In *Electoral engineering: Voting rules and political behavior* (pp. 39-77). New York: Cambridge University Press.**
- Activity – students will complete a hypothetical STV voting outcome and compare to outcome of PR.

Ethnicity, Conflict & Politics

Topic description: The change in conflict typology in the post Cold War world. Ethnic conflict and how political systems attempt to lessen the chance for conflict. Consociational theory of

Arend Lijphart on organizing states into federal, confederal and unitary state organization. The differences between Presidential and Parliamentary systems of government.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand how conflict has changed in the post-Cold War world. The characteristics and logics behind state organization between federal and unitary states and presidential and parliamentary forms of government.

Readings and activities:

- Huntington, S. P. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 7-23.
- **Lijphart, A. (2004). Constitutional Design for Divided Societies. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(2), 96-109.**
- Reynal-Querol, M. (2002). Ethnicity, Political Systems, and Civil Wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46(1), 29-54.

Populism: Historical, Left & Right Wing

Topic description: This module will focus on the political phenomenon of populism. It's historical roots of the populist movement in 19th century America will be detailed. Contemporary forms of populism will be evaluated to identify different versions of populism in North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia and the policy variations that identify both left- and right-wing forms of populism.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand different forms of populism that are currently demonstrating themselves and how populism is a reaction to political ideologies. Students should understand what populism is and how it demonstrates itself in polity.

Readings and activities:

- **Hawkins, K. A. et. al. Populism and its Causes. In Kaltwasser, C. R., et. al. (eds.). (2017). *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (pp. 341-363). Oxford: Oxford University Press.**
- Ardag, M. M., et. al. (2019). Populist Attitudes and Political Engagement: Ugly, Bad, and Sometimes Good? *Representation*, 56(3), 307-330.
- Plattner, M. F. (2009). Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(1), 81-92.
- Plattner, M. F. (2015). Is Democracy in Decline? *Democracy & Society*, 13(1), 1-25.
- Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2008). Thaksin's Populism. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 38(1), 62-83.

United States of America: Politics & Populism

Topic description: This week topic assesses the political system of the United States of America. A contemporary analysis of the American political party system, lobbying groups, electoral system and shift in party politics since the 1990's. The increasing political divide since the Clinton era and politics of populism in the era of Trump and Sanders.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand main aspects of the contemporary American political system. The effects of money in politics, rise of populism and elite reaction to populist politics.

Readings and activities:

- Maisel, L. S. (2007). Who are the Republicans? Who are the Democrats? Who are the "Others"? In *American Political Parties and Elections: A Very Short Introduction* (pp. 77-90). NY: Oxford University Press.
- **O'Neil, P. H., Fields, K., & Share, D. (2018). *Cases in Comparative Politics* (Vol. 6, pp. 93-149). NY: W.W. Norton.**

- Pepinsky, T., White, J., Sitrin, S., & Gerstein, B. (2019, October 31). Why the Impeachment Fight Is Even Scariest Than You Think. Retrieved August 17, 2020, from <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/10/31/regime-cleavage-229895>.

United Kingdom: From Thatcher and Blair to Brexit

Topic description: This week's topic analyzes the UK political system. The political party system and effects of the 'Thatcher revolution', the reaction to Thatcherism as New Labour 'Blairism'. The troubled relationship with Europe since membership in 1973 to Brexit.

Expected learning outcomes: For students to understand the historical changes in UK politics from WWII to Brexit. To understand the UK's uncomfortable relationship with the EEC/EU. How domestic and regional/international politics have impacted one another.

Readings and activities:

- Bradbury, J. (2009). The Blair Government, Devolution and Regionalism in the United Kingdom. In T. Casey (ed.), *The Blair Legacy: Politics, Policy, Governance, and Foreign Affairs* (pp. 190-203). NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Evans, E. J. (2019). *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (pp. 40-52). London: Routledge.
- O'Neil, P. H., Fields, K., & Share, D. (2018). *Cases in Comparative Politics* (Vol. 6, pp. 35-91). NY: W.W. Norton.