INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Political Science 240 – Section 01
University of Richmond
Spring 2008

Professor: Aleksandra Sznajder
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Class meeting time: TR 3:45-5:00
Classroom: WSTN 205
Office hours: TR 1:45-3:15 or by appointment

Course Description

Why doesn’t the U.S. have a welfare state like its European counterparts? Why have some countries, like the Asian Tigers, grown quickly while numerous others, especially in Africa, stagnated? Why did Communism fall? Why did Czechoslovakia cease to exist peacefully while the former Yugoslavia disintegrated violently? Why do small, open economies have an expansive public sector? Is democracy conducive to economic growth? Is a parliamentary system better for a country undergoing transition from authoritarianism than a presidential one? Is the abundance of natural resources good for development? These kinds of questions are the domain of comparative politics.

The rich and diverse field of comparative politics is devoted to the study of the different political structures, institutions, and behavior across the world, including the effects and implications of these differences as well as their underlying causes. As an introduction to comparative politics, this course’s objective is to provide an overview of the major approaches, theories, as well as substantive issues and controversies of this particular subfield of political science. In order to enhance the analytical approach to substantive issues, this course also emphasizes the diverse methodological tools used to investigate empirical questions that concern comparativists.

The substantive topics the course covers include different approaches to the state, political regime types, classification and consequences of political institutions (such as presidential vs. parliamentary systems, electoral systems, federal vs. unitary structures), democratization, political behavior, civil society, political economy of reform and development, globalization, nationalism, and political violence.

Course Requirements

Grade components:

1. Mid-term exam: 15%

A closed-book, in-class midterm exam will be administered on February 28th. It will consist of short identification and essay questions. You are responsible for mastering the entire material, whether discussed in class or covered in the assigned readings.
2. Election watch presentations: 10%

In order to deepen your knowledge of specific countries around the world as well as to observe comparative politics “in action,” each of you will prepare an 8-10 minute PowerPoint presentation on current elections in a chosen country. The presentation will cover the background and the results of the election while paying particular attention to the institutional aspects discussed in class. You will be expected to submit a handout version of your presentation the day you present. Your report should contain the following information: type of office at stake, electoral history of the country (how free have the elections been, how frequent), significance of the election, electoral system of the country, major political parties and the potential cleavages they represent (ethnic, religious, economic). You are encouraged to use the library’s research guide to help you: [http://library.richmond.edu/information/csguides/PLSC240Sznajder.htm](http://library.richmond.edu/information/csguides/PLSC240Sznajder.htm)

3. Three essays - evaluation and application of concepts and data: 40%

You will write three essays throughout the course of the semester. In these essays, you will explore and analyze the broader theoretical and empirical issues covered in the course. The essays will be worth 10%, 15%, and 15%, respectively, of the final grade. You are encouraged to use the help of the Writing Center when completing these assignments. As a reference, you should use the library research guide (see link above). Ms. Laura Horne ([ lhorne@richmond.edu](mailto:lhorne@richmond.edu)), the social science library liaison is also available for individual consultation, via email or in person.

4. Final: 25%

A closed-book final exam consisting of identification and essay questions will deal with the concepts acquired throughout the semester.

5. Participation: 10%

It is imperative that you come to class prepared, having completed the assigned readings and ready to discuss them. You are expected to participate actively in class discussions. Class participation accounts for 10% of the final grade and it will be the decisive factor in case of borderline grades.

The grading scale will be as follows:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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The A-range grades represent excellent work, B-range grades indicate good or very good work, C-range grades stand for average work, D-range for below average but passing, while the grade of F indicates failure on an assignment.
**Late Work:** All assignments are due in class on the specified date. Late assignments will result in a letter grade deduction per each day of delay, unless there are extraordinary circumstances discussed with the instructor *prior* to the original due date.

**Make-up Work:** There will be no make-ups for either exam, unless there are documented extraordinary circumstances that prevent you from taking the exams as scheduled. Also, students will not be given extra credit assignments in order to help improve grades. However, progress throughout the semester will be taken into account when determining the final grade.

**Honor Code:** All work must adhere to the University’s Student Honor Code and pledge.

**Computer Use:** Computers are to be used *solely* for the purpose of taking notes and actively participating in class discussion. I reserve the right to ask you not to use your computer if I have reasons to suspect that you are using it to surf the web, check email or engage in other non-course-related activities.

**Getting Help:** If you are experiencing difficulties with the material, please contact me! You are also encouraged to use the resources of the Writing Center, Speech Center, and the Academic Skills Center (just remember to make appointments in advance!).

### Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore:


Readings marked with * are available on the library e-reserve:  
http://librarycat.richmond.edu

Readings marked with ** are available in the Course Documents folder on Blackboard.

### Course Schedule

**Week 1.**

01/15  Introduction and course overview: what is comparative politics?

01/17  How do we study comparative politics? Discussion of Research Methodology I  
ECP: “Introduction,” p.1-19; ER: Charles A. Lave and James G. March,  
“Observation, Speculation, and Modeling,” p.7-28
Week 2.

01/22 How do we study comparative politics? Discussion of Research Methodology II
ER: Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, “Research Traditions and Theory
in Comparative Politics: An Introduction,” p.2-6; **“Game Theory: An
Introductory Sketch” http://www.iun.edu/~mathiho/mathpol/fall00/chapter15.htm,
accessed January 9, 2008

01/24 What is the state?
ECP: Chapter 2, “States,” p.20-43
ER: Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” p.31-37; *Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan
(Chapter XIII), p.183-188 (recommended)

Week 3.

01/29 Analyzing the State
*Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In,” p.40-47
ER: Jeffrey Herbst, “War and the State in Africa,” p.46-61; ER: Robert I.
Rotberg, “The New Nature of Nation-State Failure,” p.61-68; Mark
January 9, 2008)

01/31 Nations and Society I: Ethnic Identity, National Identity, Citizenship and Ethnic
Conflict
Strife,” p.79-83; Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, “Nationalism and the
Marketplace of Ideas,” p.193-213

Week 4.

02/05 Nations and Society II: Political Attitudes and Political Ideology, Political Culture
ECP: Chapter 3, “Nations and Society,” p.56-75
ER: Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” p.105-117; Amartya Sen,
“Civilizational Imprisonments: How to Misunderstand Everybody in the World,”
p.118-126

Paper #1 due

02/07 Political Economy I
ECP: Chapter 4, “Political Economy,” p.77-108
Week 5.

02/12 Political Economy II

02/14 Authoritarianism
Chapter 5, “Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism,” p.110-132

Week 6.

02/19 Democracy: Principles
ECR: Chapter 6, “Democracy,” p. 134-140

02/21 Democracy: Institutions
ECR: Chapter 6, “Democracy,” p.140-159

Week 7.

02/26 Democracy: Civil Society and Political Participation
ER: Robert D. Putnam, “Tuning In, Tuning Out,” p. 266-287; Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” p.294-304

02/28 Mid-term Exam

Week 8.

03/04 Advanced Democracies

03/06 Communist System
ECP: Chapter 8, “Communism and Post-Communism,” p.189-201
ER: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, p.353-366
Watch *A State of Mind* (on reserve)

**Paper #2 due**

Week 9.

03/11-03/13 No Class – Spring Break

Week 10.

03/18 Fall of Communism and Post-Communist Transitions  
ECP: Chapter 8, “Communism and Post-Communism,” p.201-217  
Valerie Bunce, “Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Post-Communist Experience,” p.371-381

03/20 Post-Communist Trajectories and Challenges of Development I  
Browse European Bank for Reconstruction and Development *Transition Reports*  

Week 11.

03/25 Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries and Challenges of Development II  
ECP: Chapter 9, “Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries,” p.219-248

03/27 Political Economy of Development  
Watch *Capital Sin* (on reserve)

Week 12.

04/01 Politics of Development: External Actors and Civil Society  
**Daniel Halperin, “Putting a Plague in Perspective,” *NYT*, January 1, 2008**  
Other readings may be announced  
Guest speaker (to be confirmed)

04/03 Political Regimes and Economic Development or Is Democracy Good for Growth?  

Week 13.

04/08  What are the limits to democratization?

04/10  Globalization: Convergence

Week 14.

04/15  Globalization: Divergence

04/17  Political Violence I
   ECP: Chapter 11, “Political Violence,” p.277-307
   ER: Theda Skocpol, “France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” p. 509-524

   **Paper #3 due**

Week 15.

04/22  Political Violence II: Terrorism and Comparative Politics

04/24  Course Conclusion and Review

Final exam date: Monday, April 28th, at 2-5 p.m.