V53.0500
Introduction to Comparative Politics

This course will introduce students to the study of comparative politics, which is defined as the study of domestic politics anywhere in the world. As a way of cutting into this vast topic, we specifically focus on the process of democratic transition by analyzing the democratic revolution that has swept the globe during the last thirty-five years. In turn we will explore the causes of democratization, threats to democratization, and factors that may aid in a successful consolidation of democracy. As part of this process, students will be exposed to a wide range of topics in comparative politics, including the politics of economic reform, party systems and voting, theories of ethnic politics, and social capital.

Requirements

The course is taught in two lectures (M, W, 11:00 – 12:15 in Cantor Film Center 101) and one recitation each week. Grading is based on a final exam (50%), a mid-term (20%), a 5-7 page paper (20%, due December 6), and section participation (10%). Note that the paper does not require outside research, so you can alternatively conceive of it as a take home midterm consisting of one essay question that you have a week to complete.

Office Hours

All TAs will hold office hours weekly. Students should always contact their TA first concerning any logistical questions regarding the course.

Professor Tucker will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 10:30 – 12:00 in his office in room 430 at 19 West 4th Street. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of the scheduled office hours, please email Professor Tucker directly.

Readings

This course is not taught from a textbook. Students are welcome to purchase a comparative politics textbook if they like, but there is no particular text for this class. Instead, readings will be drawn from 5 books recommended for purchase and a “virtual course pack” that contains a collection of articles and book chapters which can be downloaded individually from the course website on Blackboard. It is also suggested that students read the blog that Professor Tucker co-authors, “The Monkey Cage”, (www.themonkeycage.org).
All students are expected to have completed the relevant reading before the recitation meeting each week. There are approximately 100 – 150 pages of reading a week; some are more and some are less. In particular, the weeks on the moment of transition, economic reform, and social capital have heavy reading requirement, as does the economic voting lecture. Others are shorter. Please plan ahead accordingly! Also, please note that “recommended” readings are included only for students who want to know more about the topic; you will not be expected to have read these works, nor will you be tested on them.

The following books are recommended for purchase and are available for purchase at the NYU Book Store:

Larry Diamond et. al. (eds.) *The Global Resurgence of Democracy 2nd Edition*, (Johns Hopkins, 1996)
Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Johns Hopkins, 1996)

For a few of the reading, I have provided a link as to where you can find the material online. All other readings are posted on Blackboard.
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

I. Introduction to Comparative Politics: Sept 7, 12

Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton, *Comparative Politics Today* (8th Edition), 31-45


II. Regimes: Sept. 14, 19

*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Ch 1, 3, 4 (p.3-15, 38-65)

*Global Resurgence*: Schmitter and Karl, “What Democracy is…” Ch.4, 49-62


**Recommended:**


III: The Moment of Transition: Sept 21, 26

Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, all

*Global Resurgence*: Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave”, Ch.1, p.3-25

Mapping the Fall of Communism: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7972232.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7972232.stm)


**Recommended:**

*Global Studies: Russia*, “Central-Eastern Europe: From Dictatorship to Democracy”, p.97-115


*Global Resurgence*, Ch. 8 –10, 12 (p.111-149, 154-161)

Lijphart, Arend (ed) *Parliamentary vs. Presidential Government*: Intro (p.1-27);


*Recommended:*


V: Electoral Systems: October 5, 12


[http://www.nationalpopularvote.com/](http://www.nationalpopularvote.com/) (just poke around the site – I’ll refer to it in class. Useful for impressing your relatives when you go home for the break.)


MID TERM EXAMINATION: MONDAY, OCTOBER 17th

VI: Four Approaches to Voting and Elections (October 19, 24, 26, 31)

*October 19th: Sociological Approach to Voting*


October 24th: A Rational Approach to Voting


Recommended:


October 26th: Economic Voting

NOTE: All of these articles have a lot of statistical analysis. Don’t worry about the details of the statistics – concentrate on the arguments the authors are making and what they report as their findings.


Recommended:


October 31st: Strategic Voting


**NOTE:** I do not expect you to know the details of the models or even to be able to follow the math in this paper. Instead, I want you to focus on the basic concept of what the authors have to say about how voters choose the candidate/party for which to vote, and, in particular, when they will choose to vote for a candidate/party that is not their most preferred candidate/party. To the extent that you understand these basic points, feel free to skim the rest of the reading.

Recommended:


VII. Parties and Party Systems: November 2, 7


VIII. Partisan Identification: November 9, 14


Dalton 2006, Chapter 9 “Partisanship and Electoral Behavior”, p.177-200.

Recommended:


IX: Politics of Economic Reform: November 16, 23, 28

Sachs, Jeffrey, *Poland’s Jump to the Market Economy* – all


Recommended:


November 21st: Documentary on 2010 British Parliamentary Election

PAPER ASSIGNED IN CLASS MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH
X: Ethnic Conflict: November 30, December 5th


To skim:


**PAPER DUE IN CLASS MONDAY, DECEMBER 5TH**

XI. Social Capital: December 7, 12

Putnam, Robert, *Making Democracy Work*, all

Berman, Sheri “Civil Society and Collapse of Weimar Republic”, *World Politics* 49 (3) (April 1997) p. 401-429


**Recommended:**


**December 14: Review and Democratic Consolidation**

No Readings Assigned