PIA2050: COMPARATIVE POLITICS AND SOCIETIES

Effective Term
Semester A 2024/25

Part I Course Overview

Course Title
Comparative Politics and Societies

Subject Code
PIA - Public and International Affairs
Course Number
2050

Academic Unit
Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration
One Semester

Credit Units
3

Level
B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction
English

Medium of Assessment
English

Prerequisites
Nil

Precursors
Nil

Equivalent Courses
AIS2050 Comparative Politics and Societies
PIA3107 Comparative Politics
POL3107 Comparative Politics

Exclusive Courses
Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

The course introduces students to the comparative study of politics and societies worldwide. While it is typical for introductory courses in comparative politics to follow a descriptive, country-by-country approach—focusing on the differences and similarities between the legal/constitutional structures found in different societies—this course takes a more thematic approach, exploring some of the major explanatory questions that form the subject of real-world, comparative research in the social sciences. What accounts for the failure of state- and/or nation-building processes? Why are some countries democratic, while others are still ruled by despotic, authoritarian regimes? How do political institutions develop over time? How do political institutions affect a country's political life, its stability, and its prosperity? Can certain desirable outcomes be "engineered" through the design of the right institutions? What explains the intensity of the inter-group conflicts that define a country's politics? How can the rivalry between ethnic and other identity-based groups be kept from spiraling into violence? And how does a country's politics affect its levels of economic development? These questions—and others like them—will be tackled as part of this course's wide-ranging introduction to the study of comparative politics and societies.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

	CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify and describe the main theoretical approaches to the study of comparative politics and societies		x	x	x
2	Reflect critically upon the manner in which the field's main approaches purport to answer some of the major questions animating the the comparative study of politics and societies worldwide		x	x	x
3	Apply abstract theories to real world cases, by developing and evaluating the applicability of such theories' empirical implications		x	x	x
4	Formulate original arguments about the effects of institutions in different real-world contexts and, on that basis, develop institutional reform proposals designed to tackle a variety of governance problems		x	x	x
5	Demonstrate those skills in oral presentations and in writing		x	x	x

A1: Attitude
Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability
Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments
Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

	LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Students attend lectures dealing with key concepts, theories, and scholarly debates in Comparative Politics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
2	Group discussions	Students are asked to analyse the contents of lectures and readings	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
3	Think pieces	Students are asked to show critical thinking and to develop original arguments on topics covered in class and in the readings	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
4	Quizzes	Students are called to demonstrate their command of course materials and their capacity to apply course materials in their analysis of real world cases	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)
1	Think pieces	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	Two brief essays (1500 words each; weighted equally) asking students to engage with course materials in the development of original arguments and institutional reform proposals
2	Midterm quiz	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30	Questions will require the application of materials covered in class and selected readings in the analysis of real-world cases.
3	Final Quiz	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30	Questions will require the application of materials covered in class and selected readings in the analysis of real-world cases

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)

Assessment Task
2. Think pieces

Criterion
Demonstrate a capacity to engage abstract theories in answering the field's animating question, in the analysis of real-world cases, and in the development of institutional reform proposals

Excellent (A+, A, A-)
Excellent capacity to engage abstract theories in answering the field's animating question, in the analysis of real-world cases, and in the development of institutional reform proposals

Good (B+, B, B-)
Good capacity to engage abstract theories in answering the field's animating question, in the analysis of real-world cases, and in the development of institutional reform proposals

Fair (C+, C, C-)
Adequate capacity to engage abstract theories in answering the field's animating question, in the analysis of real-world cases, and in the development of institutional reform proposals

Marginal (D)
Limited capacity to engage abstract theories in answering the field's animating question, in the analysis of real-world cases, and in the development of institutional reform proposals

Failure (F)
Poor capacity to engage abstract theories in answering the field's animating question, in the analysis of real-world cases, and in the development of institutional reform proposals

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Assessment Task
3. Midterm and Final quizzes

Criterion
Show understanding of the relevant literature and ability to apply general theories in the analysis of real-world cases

Excellent (A+, A, A-)
Excellent understanding of the relevant literature and ability to apply general theories in the analysis of real-world cases

Good (B+, B, B-)
Good understanding of the relevant literature and ability to apply general theories in the analysis of real-world cases

Fair (C+, C, C-)
Adequate understanding of the relevant literature and ability to apply general theories in the analysis of real-world cases

Marginal (D)
Limited understanding of the relevant literature and ability to apply general theories in the analysis of real-world cases

Failure (F)
Poor understanding of the relevant literature and ability to apply general theories in the analysis of real-world cases

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Comparative politics and the comparative method; Traditions of inquiry in comparative politics; Identity and inter-group conflict; Social and political institutions; State- and nation-building processes; Democracy, non-democracy/authoritarianism, and pseudo-democracy/hybrid regimes; Democratic transitions and authoritarian reversals; Presidentialism and parliamentarism; Political parties and electoral systems; Federal and unitary governments; Protest, repression, and "the collective action problem;" Political and economic development

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

	Title
1	Siaroff, Alan. 2013. Comparing Political Regimes: A Thematic Introduction to Comparative Politics. University of Toronto Press.
2	Sartori, Giovanni. 1991. "Comparing and Miscomparing." Journal of Theoretical Politics 3: 243-57.
3	Elster, Jon. 2007. Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences. New York: Cambridge University Press. [Ch. 1-3]
4	Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner. 1986. "The Social Identity Theory of Inter-Group Behavior." In S. Worchel and L.W. Austin (eds.), Psychology of Intergroup Relations. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
5	Hall, Peter A. and Rosemary C.R. Taylor. 1996. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms." Political Studies 44: 936-57.
6	Fukuyama, Francis. 2011. The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. [Ch. 1-5]
7	Schmitter, Philippe C. and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is⋯ and Is Not." Journal of Democracy 2: 75-88.
8	Sartori, Giovanni. 1997. Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives, and Outcomes. NYU Press [Ch. 1, 4, 9].
9	Lichbach, Mark I. 1995. The Rebel's Dilemma. University of Michigan Press. [Chapters 1-2]
10	Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion. New York: Vintage Books. [Chapters 2, 7, 9-10]
11	Chandra, Kanchan. 2005. "Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability." Perspectives on Politics 3: 235-252.
12	Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1993. "Political Regimes and Economic Growth." The Journal of Economic Perspectives 7: 51-69.

Additional Readings

	Title
1	Lichbach, Mark I. and Alan S. Zuckerman (eds). 1997. Comparative Politics: Rationality, Structure, and Culture. Cambridge University Press [Ch. 1-4].
2	Hall, Peter A. 2003. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics." In J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer (eds.), Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge University Press.
3	Fukuyama, Francis. 2018. Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux [Ch. 1-4].
4	Pierson, Paul. 2004. Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis. Princeton University Press [Ch. 1].
5	Thelen, Kathleen. 1999. "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics." Annual Review of Political Science 2(1), 369-404.
6	Fukuyama, Francis. 2014. Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux [Ch. 31-36].
7	Anderson, Benedict. 1991[1983]. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso [Ch. 1-6].

8	Diamond, Larry. 2002. Thinking About Hybrid Regimes. Journal of Democracy 13: 21-35.
9	Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan. 1996. Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe. The Johns Hopkins University Press [Ch. 1-5].
10	Svolik, Milan. 2008. "Authoritarian Reversals and Democratic Consolidation." American Journal of Political Science 102:153-168.
11	Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. "Democracy's Third Wave." Journal of Democracy 2: 12-34.
12	Boix, Carles. 1999. "Setting the Rules of the Game. The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies." American Political Science Review 93: 609-624.
13	Sartori, Giovanni. 1990 [1976]. "A Typology of Party Systems." In Peter Mair (ed.), The West European Party System. Oxford University Press.
14	Reilly, Benjamin. 2001. Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management. Cambridge University Press [Ch. 1-2].
15	Brancati, Dawn. 2006. "Decentralization: Fuelling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?" International Organization 60: 651-85.
16	Stepan, Alfred. 1999. "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model." Journal of Democracy 10: 19-34.
17	Van Stekelenburg, Jacquelien and Bert Klandermans. 2009. "Social Movement Theory: Past, Present, and Prospects." In S. Ellis and I. van Kessel (eds.), Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa. Leiden: Brill.
18	Goldstone, Jack A. 2003. "Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolutions." In J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer (eds.), Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge University Press.
19	Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." World Politics 49: 155-83.
20	Inglehart, Ronald and Christian Welzel. 2005. Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence. Cambridge University Press [Ch. 1].
21	Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org
22	Resources for Comparative Politics Research, http://www.poliscidata.com/pages/comparativePolitics.php
23	Guide to Researching Comparative Politics on the Internet, https://www.macmillanihe.com/companion/Hague-Harrop-Mccormick-Comparative-Government-And-Politics-11e/student-resources/Guide-to-Researching-Comparative-Politics-on-the-Internet/