INTL 204

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Koç University
Fall 2004

Instructor: Dr. Murat Somer     Office: CAS 153
E-mail: musomer@ku.edu.tr     Telephone: 338-1646
Class Hours:     Sec 1: MW 11:00-12:15 p.m.     Office Hours: W 3:30-5 p.m. and by
Sec 2: MW 14:00-15:15 p.m.     appointment
Location: CAS B33

Course Description

Throughout the world, people tend to believe that they have unique political issues and problems, i.e., that these issues and problems originate from the specific conditions of their own government, geography, or culture. This mostly flawed perception of politics may take the form of American exceptionalism, French exceptionalism, or Turkish exceptionalism. In fact, few political problems solely exist in one country, and systematic comparisons with other countries can significantly improve one’s understanding of them. In order to be able to make such comparisons, one is helped by the knowledge of comparative politics, which is a subfield of political science. This course is an introduction to comparative politics and has the following primary objectives.

1. To familiarize you with the basic questions, concepts, and language of political science in general and of comparative politics in particular.
2. To help you to realize that the fundamental questions and problems of politics are not unique to any particular country or culture but exist in multiple countries.
3. To teach you the fundamental nature and functions of political systems, and the standards using which we can judge the level of political development in different countries, for example their level of democracy.
4. To teach you how you can systematically compare and contrast the political systems of different countries and how this can improve our understanding of them.
5. To familiarize you with the alternative political systems of major countries and to help you to understand their advantages and disadvantages.
6. To improve your analytical and critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills.
Grading

Attendance, participation, and any assigned homework 20 percent of the total grade

Midterm 25 percent

Final exam 30 percent

Research paper project 25 percent

Readings and Lectures

This class is intended to be participatory. So that we can have time for class discussions, the lectures will only partially cover the information in the book. You are responsible for the information in all of the readings and you should do the readings before the class meetings rather than later. I will assume that you read and understand the material in the readings unless you tell me otherwise in class.

Class participation

I value honest and constructive class participation, which is an integral part of learning. When you attend class, I expect you to stay focused on the lecture or class discussions all the time.

Case Studies and In-Class participation

Every week, we will read and discuss one or two case studies from Annual Editions. Everybody is responsible for reading the case studies. Each week, one group of students will prepare the debate questions, on the basis of the case(s) assigned for that week, and another group of students will write a report on the case(s) and will lead the discussion.

Research paper project

You will write a 10-page (about 3000 words) research paper. More detailed instructions will follow.

Textbooks:


Course Outline

If necessary, this outline and the rest of the syllabus are subject to change.

Part I. The Nuts and Bolts of Politics and Comparing Political Systems
Week 1 (Sept. 27-29):

Introduction and organization; what is politics, why do we study it?

Week 2 (Oct. 4-6):

Nations and States
Individual and collective decision-making; power, legitimacy, sovereignty, government and society

Chap. 1 and Lecture notes

Week 3 (Oct. 12-14):

What do political systems do?
Comparing political systems, comparative methods
Chap. 2 and Lecture notes

Case Study 1: Article # 46, p. 205. Cultural Explanations: The Man in the Baghdad Café

Week 4 (October 18-20):

Interest groups and political participation; political culture and socialization
Chaps. 3 and 4, Lecture notes

Case Studies 2, 3: Article # 15, p. 64. Interest Groups: Ex Uno, Plures. / Article # 13, p. 58. Public Opinion: Is There a Crisis?

Week 5 (Oct. 25-27):

Political Parties and interest aggregation
Chap. 5 and Lecture notes


Week 6 (Nov 1-3):

Government and public policy making
Chaps. 6 and 7 and Lecture Notes


Part II. Politics in Industrialized Democracies

Week 7 (Nov 8-10):
Industrialized Democracies, Concepts and Issues
Lecture Notes

Government and politics in Great Britain, Chap. 8

Case Study 8: Article # 1, p. 12. A Constitutional Revolution in Britain?

Week 8 (Nov 15-17):
Bayram - Break on Monday, and MIDTERM

Week 9 (Nov 22-24):
Government and Politics in Germany, Chap. 10 and Lecture Notes
Case Study 9: Article # 8, p. 39. How Germany was Suffocated?

Part III. Politics in Less Developed Countries

Week 10 (Nov 29, Dec 1):
Politics in Less Developed Countries, Concepts and Issues
Lecture notes

Week 11 (Dec 6-8):
Underdevelopment, divisiveness, and democracy, Nigeria,
Chap. 18 and Lecture notes

Part IV. Current Problems and Trends

Week 12 (Dec 13-15):
Democracy, Democratic Transition and Consolidation
Lecture notes

Week 13 (Dec 20-22):
Russia and the Former Soviet Union
Chapter 7, Lecture notes


**Week 14 (Dec 27-29):**

Religion and Democracy

Case Studies 14, 15: Article # 41, p. 181. Iran: Doubting Reform / Article # 42, p. 185. Bin Laden, the ‘Arab Street’, and the Middle East’s Democracy Deficit.

**Week 15 (Jan 3-5):**

Comparative Challenges of Joining the EU


Final exam will be on the date scheduled by the registrar. It will be comprehensive with somewhat more focus on the subjects covered after the midterm.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Academic honesty is a fundamental value that all members of the university should cherish. Students and faculty at Koç adhere to the following principles of academic honesty:

1. **Individual responsibility and accountability** for all individual work, written or oral, including attendance. Copying from others or providing answers or information, written or oral, to others is *cheating*.
2. Providing **proper acknowledgement of original author**: you should acknowledge the person whenever you use another author’s ideas or information. Using a text without acknowledging its author or copying from another student’s paper is *plagiarism*.
3. Study or project group activity is effective and *authorized teamwork*. Unauthorized help from another person or having someone else write one’s paper or assignment is *collusion*.

Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion, especially in exams are serious offences resulting in an F grade and disciplinary action.