INTL 204
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Koç University
Fall 2005

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Class Hours: M-W 11:00-12:15     Office Hours: M 3:30-5 p.m. and by
Location: SOS Z-27     appointment

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 10 percent of the total grade
Discussion leading in class 10 percent
Midterms  25 + 25 percent
Final exam  30 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 Discussion-Leading

In most of the weeks, 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 questions to be discussed in class and will lead the discussion.

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 (Sep. 26-28):

Introduction and organization, Nations and states, sovereignty
What is politics, why do we study it?
Individual and collective decision-making; power, legitimacy, government and society
Chap. 1 and Lecture notes

Week 2 (Oct. 3-5):

What do political systems do?
Comparing political systems, comparative methods
Chap. 2 and Lecture notes
Week 3 (Oct. 10-12):

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

Class discussion on current German politics, Turkey and the EU

Week 4 (Oct. 17-19):

Political Parties and interest aggregation
Chap. 5 and Lecture notes

Case Study 1,2:
Article # 13, Public Opinion: Is There a Crisis?
Article # 14, Political Parties: Empty Vessels?

Week 5 (Oct. 24-26):

Government and public policy making
Parliamentary vs. presidential systems
Centralized vs. decentralized systems
Chap. 6 and Lecture Notes

Case Study 3:
Article # 16, Advanced Democracies and the New Politics

Week 6 (Oct. 31-Nov. 2):

Public policy; the functions and capacities of states
Chap. 7 and Lecture Notes

Bayram - Break on Wednesday

Part II. Politics in Industrialized Democracies

Week 7 (Nov. 7-9):

MIDTERM I

Case Study 4:
Article # 41, Capitalism and Democracy

Week 8 (Nov. 14-16):

Industrialized Democracies, Concepts and Issues
Lecture Notes
Government and politics in Great Britain, Chap. 8

**Week 9 (Nov. 21-23):**

Britain continued

Case Studies 5, 6:
Article # 1, A Constitutional Revolution in Britain?
Article # 2, The Blair Moment

**Week 10 (Nov. 28-30):**

Government and Politics in Germany, Chap. 10 and Lecture Notes

Case Study 7: Article # 10-11 (combined), Schroeder’s Unfinished Business / The Vices and Virtues of Old Germany’s ‘Model’ Economy

**Part III. Politics in Less Developed Countries**

**Week 11 (Dec. 5-7):**

Politics in the United States of America-USA
Ch 12, and Lecture Notes

Movie (TBA)

**Week 12 (Dec. 12-14):**

Politics in Less Developed Countries, Concepts and Issues
Lecture notes

Case Study 8: Article #12, Japanese Spirit, Western Things
Case Study 9: Article #32, South Africa, Democracy without the People

**Part IV. Current Problems and Trends**

**Week 13 (Dec. 19-21):**

MIDTERM II & REVIEW

**Week 14 (Dec. 26-28):**

Democracy, Democratic Transition and Consolidation
Lecture notes
Russia and the Former Soviet Union
Chapter 12, Lecture notes
Case Studies 10,11:
Article #33, China, the Quiet Revolution

**Week 15 (Jan 2-4):**

Russia continued

Case Studies 12,13:
Article # 27, Ten Myths about Russia.
Article # 28, Russian Democracy under Putin

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 second 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:

- **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.

  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.

  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 and cheating.

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