INTL 204

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Koç University
Fall 2003

Instructor: Dr. Murat Somer    Office: CASE 153
E-mail: musomer@ku.edu.tr    Telephone: 338-1646
Class Hours: 12:30-1:45 p.m.    Office Hours: Tu 2-6 p.m. and by
Location: CAS Z26            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.

In order to succeed in this class, you must attend the class, follow the lectures, and do the readings regularly. You should do the readings before the class meetings rather than later.
Grading

Attendance, participation, and any assigned homework 15 percent of the total grade

Midterm 25 percent

Final exam 25 percent

Research paper project 35 percent “

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.

Research paper project
You will write a 10-15 page (3000-4000 words) research paper comparing two countries, excluding Turkey, with regard to one subject (for example political party system, democratization, political development, political culture, religion and politics, nationalism and politics, economic crisis and elections).

More detailed instructions will follow.


Course Outline
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:

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

Individual and collective decision-making; power, state, nation-state, government and society

Chap. 1 and Lecture notes

Week 2:

Comparing political systems, comparative methods
Chap. 2 and Lecture notes
Week 3:

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

Week 4:

Political Parties and interest aggregation
Chap. 5 and Lecture notes

Week 5:

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

Part II. Politics in Industrialized Democracies

Week 6:

Industrialized Democracies, Concepts and Issues
Lecture Notes

Week 7:

Government and politics in Great Britain, Chap. 8

Week 8:

Review and MIDTERM

Week 9:

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

Part III. Politics in Less Developed Countries

Week 10:

Politics in Less Developed Countries, Concepts and Issues
Lecture notes

Week 11:

Underdevelopment, divisiveness, and democracy, Nigeria,
Chap. 18 and Lecture notes

Part IV. Current Problems and Trends

Week 12:
Democracy, Democratic Transition and Consolidation
Lecture notes

Week 13:
Russia and the Former Soviet Union
Chapter 7, Lecture notes

Week 14:
Religion and Democracy
Lecture Notes and
Reading in reserve:

Week 15:
Ethnic, cultural, and identity conflict
Lecture Notes and
Readings in reserve:

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. 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.