SOSC 3520 Understanding Comparative Politics
Fall, 2023
Wed, Fri 1:30pm-2:50pm
Rm 1409 (Lift 25-26)

Instructor: Dr. Jiangyang HUANG
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Course Description:
This introductory course targets advanced undergraduate students interested in analyzing politics from a comparative perspective. Comparative politics is an essential subfield of political sciences and encompasses many topics. This course selects the most important ones: comparative approach and methodology, comparative political regimes, comparative political institutions, and comparative political economy. We explore different political phenomena and outcomes, including democratization, authoritarian resilience, democratic recession, economic development, etc.

By the end of this course, students will be able to 1) gain an understanding of key concepts, methods, and theories in comparative politics; 2) describe and analyze the similarities and differences in different political systems around the world; 3) apply concepts and theories to develop explanations of various political issues in comparative politics.

Grading Policy

Participation (10%). Students are expected to actively contribute during the class after finishing the essential reading. You are encouraged to read other assigned readings, though you are not forced to do so except if you select to do the weekly response of that day. Students need to sign the ATTENDANCE SHEET for each class after the add-drop period. Consider that you may have various personal, family, and emergency reasons for missing the class. You will have a maximum of six chances for absences. After
the sixth absence, you will lose ALL participation points.

**Weekly critical responses (20%).** Starting from the third week (Sep. 13 to Nov.29), you are required to write two short critical memos to the class-assigned readings. To secure a good score, your response should avoid only summarizing the content of the reading. Instead, you must show your own insights and arguments about the reading. If you are unsatisfied with the score of two responses, you can do it one more time. I will take the two highest scores from the three responses. By starting to write earlier, you may get more chances to get a higher score. Each response is around two double-spaced pages (12-point font). The deadline is before the start of the day’s class (1:29 pm).

**Midterm Exam (25%).** The midterm exam will take place in class and will be an hour long. The exam format will be multiple-choice. There will be no make-up exams unless there is a family emergency and your emergent surgery. Make-up exams may only be possible by submitting a doctor’s note and contact information. The mid-term will cover the readings and lectures in the class.

**Final Group Project (45%).** Students will work in groups of two to complete a group project. Students should organize no later than Sep.27. The TA will help you to form the group. The finished product of the final paper is a comparative case study of a specific political phenomenon in two countries of interest to you. The group project will be graded in three parts: 1) **Research Outline (10%)**. By Nov. 3, each group will be required to submit a research outline (maximum of three double-spaced pages, including references). The research outline should include the background of the study, the research question, and the reasons for case selection; 2) **Final Presentation (10%)**. The group will have approximately 8 minutes to present their preliminary results in class, 6 minutes for presentation, and 2 minutes for Q &A. 3) **Final Paper (25%)**. The final paper will be approximately twelve pages including references (12-point font, double spaces). The due date will be on Dec 5 (11:59 pm). To avoid free riding, the final presentation and paper should attach a page about the detailed division of labor. An individual’s grade may be adjusted by the quality of labor.

**Textbooks**
Course Schedule and Readings

PART 1. Comparative Approach and Methodology (Week 1-2)

Sep.1: Introduction
CGG, Chapter 1

Week 2: Approach and Methodology
CGG, Chapter 2

PART 2. Comparing State and Regime (Week 3-6)

Week 3: Sate and State-Society Relationship
CGG, Chapter 4

Assigned Readings:

Week 4: Democracy
CGG, Chapter 5: 71-86; Chapter 6: 97-116

Assigned Readings:
Sep.22 Ronald Inglehart and Christian Wetzel, “How Development Leads to Democracy: What We Know about Modernization,” Foreign Affairs, (March/April

Week 5: Autocracy
CGG, Chapter 5: 87-95; Chapter 8

Assigned Readings:

Week 6: Democratic Transitions
CGG Chapter 7

Assigned Readings:

PART 3. Comparing Political Institutions (Week 7-9)

Week 7: Government Systems and Electoral System
CGG Chapter 10; Chapter 11: 261-286; Chapter 13: 345-348

Assigned Readings:

Week 8: Political Parties
CGG Chapter 12: 289-307
Assigned Reading

Oct 20 Midterm Exam (Content cover until Oct. 13)

Oct. 25 and 27: Democratic Recession
CGG Chapter 14: 351-363; 370-391

Assigned Readings:

PART 4. Comparative Political Economy (Week 9-14)

Week 9: Economic Development
Keefer, Philip, “The Poor Performance of Poor Democracies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007)

Assigned Readings:

Week 10: Government-Business Relationship

Assigned Readings:
Nov.8 Chalmers Johnson, “Political Institutions and Economic Performance: The Government-Business Relationship in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan,” in *The Political


Week 11: Development Model

Assigned Readings:

Nov 22 and 24: Final Presentation

Comparative Politics: Latest Progress

Nov. 29 Assigned Reading: