Syllabus for Political Science 241

Introduction to Comparative Government & Politics
Tue. & Thur., 11:00 am-12:20 pm, 1352 Gilman
Spring 2005, Iowa State University
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Dept. of Political Science
Office Hours: M. & W., 11:15-12:15
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Precis
This course surveys major variations in domestic politics across the world, and it reviews leading explanations for these differences. We will examine questions such as: why are some polities democratic and others authoritarian? Are their fixed conditions for democratization? Why are government agencies more powerful or capable in some countries than others? Are multi-ethnic societies more or less prone to civil wars? How are civil wars resolved? Why do some states have greater taxation levels than others? Why do some states have extensive government intervention in the economy while others have less? We will study the role that government institutions, economic interests, political ideologies, and social identities play in shaping politics across countries. This course is organized thematically rather than by country or region. As the title implies, the goal is to compare polities in order to understand why politics varies.

Requirements
All students must do the assigned reading. I reserve the right to distribute unannounced in-class quizzes on the assigned readings for the week. In addition to course readings, students should follow current events in international affairs. The New York Times, The Washington Post, the BBC World Service and the National Public Radio (NPR) news broadcasts (on WOI 640 AM) are excellent daily news sources. I will also post items on the course website. The main course website is at this URL: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~pol_s.241/>. The WebCT site is used only for participating in the discussion forum, releasing test grades, and posting non-public copyrighted material under fair use provisions. For regular information and relevant links you should monitor the main course website, not the WebCT version.

ISU advises: “If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you will need to go to the Disability Resource (DR) Office for coordination of your academic accommodations. The DR is located in the Student Services Building, Room 1076. Their phone number is 515-294-6624, TDD 515-294-6335 or email Bea at <Awoniyib@iastate.edu>.”

Class Participation: All students should be prepared to participate in class discussions and in the on-line discussion via WebCT. Class participation on the WebCT discussion forum is worth 10 percent of the course grade. Each student has a D as his or her default grade. If students participate well, their grades will be increased. Students who fail to participate or who do so poorly will get a D.

Students are not expected to perform Periclean orations, but everyone should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, current events, and question that I pose on the board. Criticisms of
points made in readings, by fellow students, and by yours truly are welcome, and debates may emerge among students. Students should respect their classmates’ contributions, and refrain from partisan or parochial philippics. The purpose of these discussions is not to win imaginary debating points, but to learn beyond solitary reading and unexamined listening.

In-Class Quizzes: There will be seven, in-class short answer quizzes on discussions and readings. Each is worth 5% of the grade. These will be held during the last 30 minutes of class on the following Thursdays: 20 Jan., 3 Feb., 17 Feb., 3 Mar., 24 Mar., 7 Apr., & 21 Apr.

Take-Home Essays: There are three essays for this course, including the final exam. Students will be randomly assigned due dates for two essays during the term. The first is worth 5-10% of the grade and the second is worth 15-20% of the grade (the first essay will be weighted lower and the second higher for students who do poorly on the first essay). All essays will be based on the readings and questions that I present the week before the essay is due. Each essay should be 3-4 pages long (800-1000 words).

Your final exam is a take-home essay of 4-5 pages long (1100-1200) words based on a question that I present. It is worth 25% of the course grade.

Penalties: Students must submit take-home assignments on time and sit at the designated in-class tests. Students may not ‘make-up’ tests or papers at will. There are two exceptions. First, for personal emergencies (e.g., a death in the family, medical problems), students should obtain a note from the dean of students. Second, for students with extra-curricular activities that conflict with in-class tests, arrangements for an alternate date and time must be made at least a week in advance. The student must provide verification of the activity in order to be eligible for an alternate test appointment. I do not accept notification after the fact (e.g., “I didn’t turn in my paper last week because I had a match”).

A computer mishap will not excuse a late paper. You should make frequent and multiple back-ups of your work (to at least 2 separate floppy disks or other removable media), so that you never lose more than one hour’s worth of work. If you own your own computer, be sure you familiarize yourself with the ISU’s computer labs in case your system breaks down.

Grade Components

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Participation: 10%
- In-Class Quizzes: 35% (5% each)
- Term Essays: 30% (combined)
- Final Essay: 25%

Each component will be assigned a letter grade, converted to a grade point, and multiplied by its percentage weighting. I do not accept make-up assignments, re-writing of papers, or extra-credit work.
Syllabus for Political Science 241

Academic Honesty

Iowa State University regulations regarding academic honesty will be enforced. See Iowa State University Catalog, “Academic Dishonesty,” p.38-39. The penalty for plagiarism or cheating on exams is failure for the course.

Readings

There is one text-book available for purchase for this course at University Bookstore (294.5684) in the Memorial Union and the Campus Bookstore (292.1616), 2300 Lincoln Way.:


Other assigned readings will be available on-line, usually via WebCT. In addition I will supplementary post readings or links to readings on the main course website or on WebCT.

11 & 13 Jan.
Introduction: Why Is It Called “Comparative” Politics?
Sodaro, Chap. 1 & 2 (p.1-54)

18 & 20 Jan. (1st Class Quiz)
Power, Politics, and Scientific Reasoning
Sodaro, Chap. 3 & 4 (p.56-115)

25 & 27 Jan.
The Sovereign Territorial State and its Rivals
Sodaro, Chap. 5 (p.119-138)
TBA

1 & 3 Feb. (2nd Class Quiz)
Nationalism, Ethnicity and Political Identity
Sodaro, Chap. 6 (p.141-160)
Sodaro, p.686-696; 706-709

8 & 10 Feb.
Democracy
Sodaro, Chap. 7 (p.162-182)
Sodaro, p.341-353; p.392-397; 342-451

15 & 17 Feb. (3rd Class Quiz)
Liberalization and Democratization
Sodaro, Chap. 9 (p.207-228)
Sodaro, p.489-499;
Syllabus for Political Science 241

Paper 03-05.
http://repositories.cdlib.org/csd/03-05

22 & 24 Feb.
Democratic Consolidation and Its Discontents
Sodaro, Chap. 8 (p.185-205)
Sodaro, p.362-383; 451-470

1 & 3 Mar. (4th Class Quiz)
Creating Electoral Systems
Sodaro, p.622-624; 677-681; 704-706; 715-718

8 & 10 Mar.
Society and Interest Groups
Sodaro, Chap. 10 (p.230-251)
Sodaro, p.608-617

SPRING BREAK

22 & 24 Mar. (5th Class Quiz)
Ideology and Culture
Sodaro, Chap. 11 & 12 (p.255-293)
Sodaro, p.568-574

29 & 31 Mar.
Civil Wars

5 & 7 Apr. (6th Class Quiz)
Rebuilding Failed & Defeated States
Syllabus for Political Science 241

12 & 14 Apr.
Comparative Political Economy
  Sodaro, Chap. 13 (295-314)
  Sodaro, p.475-480; 500-523

19 & 21 Apr. (7th Class Quiz)
CPE II
  Sodaro, Chap. 14 (316-336)
  Sodaro, p.640-680

26 & 28 Apr.
Conclusions
  TBA