Course title: Comparative Politics Theory, Methodology, and Practice
Course code: (GI) POLI 3005 ROIT
Programs offering course: Rome Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: International Relations and Political Science
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring Block III 2021

Course Description
This course introduces students to the methodology and major concepts and theories in the Political Science field of comparative politics. Students learn how to analyze and assess similarities and differences among political systems. Students study and compare the domestic politics, political institutions and conflicts of various countries and through time within single countries. Students learn how to identify and explain political similarities and differences among countries, in the process gaining a critical perspective on politics in the U.S.

Learning Objectives
By completing this course, students will:

- Introduce students to the uses, major concepts, reference texts and authors of an important sub-field of the discipline of Political Science.
- Evaluate the significant differences between the political systems of the countries analyzed and be able to explain how these differences translate into a specific landscape of political parties and characteristic patterns of governance.
- Compare U.S. political institutions, values and practices with those of other countries.
- Use constructs from the field of Comparative Politics to identify common criteria for evaluating political institutions and governance
- Practice critical thinking skills by developing and applying concepts from Comparative Politics to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different political systems while analyzing their similarities and differences.

Course Prerequisites
Students should have completed at least one 2000-level course in Political Science or International Relations.

Methods of Instruction
This course is taught through short lectures supported by PowerPoint presentations, discussion of the assigned readings, and partner and group work. Active student participation is crucial for the success of the course, including careful preparation of the readings and other assigned homework. There will be three field trips or site visits during the course, adding new perspectives and opportunities for students to engage with the course topics in a non-theoretical context.

Assessment and Final Grade
1. Homework assignments 20%
2. Take-home Mid-Term exam 10%
3. Presentation 10%
4. Mid-Term project 20%
5. Final paper 20%
6. Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements
Homework assignments

Students write two short papers based on readings and information from out of class activities. 750 words for each assignment.

Take-home Mid-Term exam

The midterm will be a take-home, open-book exam consisting of “prompts”, or questions that require synthesizing information and topics developed in the course. “Take home” means students will complete the exam outside of class, but without the help of any other person except the readings and notes (= “open book”). There will be 5 prompts, comprising of 150 words in response per prompt.

Presentation

Students will choose a topic by the end of Week 3 for which they will prepare a short oral presentation of about 10 minutes.

Mid-Term project

Using technology akin to Canva, students will create a poster for academic conference presentation, outlining the key differences and impact of the US political system in comparison with the host country political system. Students are expected to demonstrate extensive knowledge of both systems in the poster.

Final paper

Students will choose individually a topic from the material covered thus far and elaborate (2000 words) a comparative politics research project. Final essay topics must be confirmed with the instructor by end of week 4 via Canvas email.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class: 1.1 Why do we compare?

This opening lecture will present briefly the history of Comparative Politics around the world and introduce its macro dimensions that will be approached in this course: regimes, actors, institutions and policies. Students will discuss ad hoc some controversies in Comparative Politics, such as “Democracy with Adjectives” or “The End of the Transition Paradigm”.

**Week 2**

Class: 2.1 How to build a case

How to build a case

This class will outline the major differences between qualitative and quantitative methods, in particular their scope: (theory building, theory testing; small-N and large-N studies). Students will discuss how to build up a solid case based on profound operationalization. Beyond theoretic discussion, class will consist in a brainstorming about different approaches to the same subject: How to build a case? Although the actual topic can vary, electoral participation is recommended.


Class: 2.2 State-building and state-failure

This session discusses the importance of the state as the principal government unit in comparative politics, recaps some historical aspects of the emergence of the nation-state and introduces different theories about state-failure.


**Due first homework**

Class: 2.3 Democracy

This first session about regimes discusses the major contributions to democratic theory from
polyarchy to contemporary liberal democracy and its challenges.


**Week 3**

**Class: 3.1 Authoritarianism and Transition processes**

This class outlines the different degrees of non-democratic regimes and introduces the grand theories of transition processes, in particular the third wave of democratization.


**Class: Measuring and sub-categorizing democracy**

3.2

This class pays tribute to importance of democratic studies in CP and introduces and discusses the major approaches and tools to measuring or categorizing democracies.


**Take-home exam**

**Week 4**

**Class: 4.1 Executives**

This class presents the principal characteristics of parliamentary and presidential systems. Students will be acquainted with the mechanisms that elect and withdraw governments and discuss how the different institutional solutions meet democratic exigencies.


**Due Mid-term paper**

**Class: 4.2 Legislatures**

This class covers the different institutional solutions for the legislative power, such as the number of chambers, the elections and status of the legislators. Additionally, students will learn how the different internal protocols are a main interest of CP.


**Site Visit**

**Class: 4.3 Electoral Systems**

Electoral systems are the core fragment of political regimes. Students will learn how to assess an electoral system from a comparative perspective.


Week 5
Class:  5.1  Parties and Party systems
This class will discuss the main cleavages that have shaped party systems throughout the 20th
century and question in how far those cleavages are still accurate or if they have been replaced.
Chapters 2+3

Due second home-work

Class: Citizenship and political engagement
5.2
This class covers the non-state actors sphere by acknowledging the role of political activism and political engagement. Students will learn about the different historical phases of social movements and evaluate the alternative methods of political action.
MCADAM, Doug; TARROW, Sidney; TILLY, Charles. Dynamics of contention. Social Movement Studies, v. 2, n. 1

Out of class activity: visit with a local NGO

Week 6
Class: The policy cycle
6.1
In this session students will discuss the principal theories about the “policy cycle”. They will apply it ad-hoc to some popular policy fields covered by CP.
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu/documents/45921238/PUBLIC_POLICY_Public_Administration_and_public_management/Theories_of_the_Policy_Cycle.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1511359488&Signature=BoAtIFTklBUozSj%2BEBqcfi36ws1%3Disposition:inline%3B%20filename%3DPUBLIC_POLICY_Public_Administration_and_public_management/Theories_of_the_Policy_Cycle.pdf#page=70

Class:  6.2  Closing session / Wrap up
The closing session wraps up the topics covered throughout class and discusses some important
topics of Comparative Politics that have been left out. Students will have the chance to evaluate
their learning curve and clarify the most urgent doubts.
Class should take place in an open space as third out-of-class activity: Space to be chosen closer
to the activity for climate and security issues.

Course Materials
Readings


Santos,


**Online Resources**

https://www.v-dem.net/en/

https://www.idea.int/

https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/

https://www.bti-project.org/en/home/