



School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations

Political Science and International Relations Programme

POLS 114: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Trimester Two, 2008

What can we learn by comparing the politics and government of different countries? In this course we tackle two of the central areas of debate in comparative politics: why do some states have authoritarian regimes and others have democratically elected governments, and why are some states strong while others are weak? We will examine competing explanations for regime type and state strength including economic, cultural and institutional theories of state development. We will then apply these theories to four case studies: Colombia, Canada, Iran and Congo. Students will undertake comparative analysis of two additional states in the written assignments for this course.

Lectures: Tuesday, 12-12:50 pm in KKL303, Wednesday and Thursday
12-12.50 pm MCLT 101

Tutorials: One hour per week, sign up at <https://signups.victoria.ac.nz>

Coordinator: Hilary Pearse

Contact: By email at Hilary.Pearse@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 463 9495

Office hours: After lectures from 1-3 in MY 506 or by appointment.

Required text: *POLS 114 Coursebook 2008* available from Student Notes

Assessment: Two 1500 word essays, each worth 25%
Final three hour examination worth 50%

Workload: 12 hours per week, including class contact hours

Mandatory requirements: Submission of all assessment in required format by due dates
Attendance at a minimum of 9 out of 11 tutorials

Course website: <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>

The Blackboard site for this course will be used for:

- 1) The electronic submission of essays
- 2) Distribution of lecture slides at the end of each topic
- 3) Distribution of important course handouts
- 4) Links to useful electronic resources
- 5) Any additional information

Course Objectives

Knowledge

- 1) Students will be able to classify and compare political systems according to regime type and state strength.
- 2) Students will be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of three alternative theories of state development.
- 3) Students will understand the purpose and limitations of the comparative method and use it in their own research to identify cause and effect.
- 4) Students will be familiar with the political regimes of six country cases and be able to apply this knowledge as evidence to support theoretical arguments.
- 5) Students will recognise that the central concepts of comparative politics are being constantly challenged and redefined.
- 6) Students will understand that the processes of classification, comparison and analysis are subjective and the results of our research are debatable rather than definitive.

Skills

- 1) Students will learn to read original, and sometimes comparative political research in order to identify the central arguments and key piece of supporting evidence.
- 2) Students will develop their capacity to question as they read, rather than accepting arguments and evidence without challenge.
- 3) Students will distil and synthesise definitions of key concepts and interpretations of central ideas from lectures, tutorials and readings.
- 4) Students will conduct independent research on their own country cases.
- 5) Students will construct persuasive arguments and express these clearly and concisely.

Course Format

The content of this course is divided into eleven topics. Each topic is first introduced in lectures then discussed in the tutorials of the following week. The course readings for each topic consist of original pieces of research in comparative politics, often written by some of the most influential scholars in this subfield. Lectures will introduce you to the key concepts and central arguments from the readings and place them in critical context by presenting arguments that other scholars have made to challenge these ideas. The goal here is to help you approach the readings with an understanding of why you are reading each text and what its significance is to the course as a whole. Tutorials provide you with an opportunity both to discuss the texts and to ask questions about concepts that may remain unclear.

Course Assessment

The assignments in this course require you to apply concepts from the readings and lectures to country case studies of your own selection. Using these abstract ideas to analyse countries that we are interested in helps us to understand both the political systems of the country and the

ideas themselves more clearly. The final three hour examination will consist of essay questions that test your understanding of these ideas and your capacity to evaluate them using evidence from the four country case studies covered in lectures. This exam will take place during the examination period, 17 October – 8 November 2008 (exact date, time and venue TBA).

Essay One: Due Monday 11 August by 5pm

Select a country case study that is NOT one of the four country case studies that we focus on in this course. Would you classify your case study as a weak or strong state? Why? Would you classify it as a democratic or authoritarian regime? Why? (1,500 words)

Essay Two: Due Friday 19 September by 5pm

Compare your original country case study to a second case that you would place in a different position on the regime continuum (democratic to authoritarian). Both must be cases that we are NOT studying in this course. Which of the three causal approaches (economic, institutional or cultural) is most useful for explaining why your two cases have different political regimes? Why? (1500 words).

Submission of essays

Essays MUST be submitted in TWO forms. A hard copy of the essay must be placed in the marked box outside the School office MY 518 by the due date with the Programme Cover Sheet attached. In addition an electronic version of the essay must also be placed in the 'Essays' folder on the course's Blackboard website by the due date.

Extensions can be given only by the Course Coordinator. Late essays will be penalised with a deduction of 5% for the first day late, and 2% per day thereafter, up to a maximum of 8 days. Essays submitted more than eight days late will be accepted as fulfilling the mandatory course requirement, but will not be graded.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words. It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

Statement on the use of Turnitin

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. At the discretion of the head of School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by turnitin. You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

General University policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Student and Staff Conduct
- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

Date	Topic	Reading
8,9,10 July	Course overview What is a state? What is the state?	Scott
15,16,17 July	Strong states and weak states	Fukuyama Rotberg
22, 23, 24 July	Democratic and authoritarian regimes	Diamond Levitsky and Way
29,30, 31 July	Economic development and democratisation	Lipset Przeworski and Limongi
5,6, 7 August	Political institutions	Mainwaring and Shugart Helmke and Levitsky
Monday 11 August: Essay One due by 5pm		
12, 13, 14 August	Political culture	Almond and Verba Putnam
16-31 August: Mid-trimester break		
2,3,4 September	The comparative method	Mill Lijphart
9,10,11 September	Case study 1: Canada	Leslie Gidengil et al.
16, 17, 18 September	Case study 2: Iran	Chehabi Baktiari
Friday 19 September: Essay Two due by 5pm		
23, 24, 25 September	Case study 3: Colombia	Bejarano and Pizarro Aviles
30 September, 1, 2 October	Case study 4: Congo	Schatzberg Nzongola-Ntalaja
7, 8, 9 October	Course review	
17 October – 8 November: Exam period		