Concepts and Methods in Comparative Politics

I. The Comparative Method
   A. The Logic of Comparison
   B. The Quest for Theory

III. Themes for Comparative Politics
   A. A World of States
   B. Governing the Economy
   C. The Democratic Idea
   D. The Politics of Collective Identity
Overview of Course

- Tests and Exams
- Course Website
- Textbook Companion Website
- Comparing Governments
I. The Comparative Method

- Comparative Politics is both a SUBJECT and a METHOD

- Comparative Politics as a Subject
  - Examines *domestic* politics and government *within* numerous countries, whereas international politics looks at relations *between* different countries.

- Comparative Politics as a Method
  - Comparative political analysis

- *Q: Should America adopt nationalized healthcare?*
  - Rudyard Kipling: “What should they know of England who only England know”
B. The Quest for Theory

- **POLITICAL SCIENCE??**
- **HYPOTHESES TESTING**
  - Political PROBLEM ➔ Formulate a **HYPOTHESIS**
    - **Hypothesis**: a potential but unproven answer to an important political question.
  - Examine **EVIDENCE** which either **SUPPORTS** (develop theory?) or **REFUTES** hypothesis (start again)
  - **(Causal) Theory**: a set of concepts and hypotheses which posit cause and effect relationships between various social and political factors

- **LIMITATIONS OF POLITICAL THEORIES**
  - Multicausality/Causal Complexity (limits on experimentation)
  - Human Free Will
A. A World of States

- **STATE**: Comprises the country’s key political institutions that are responsible for making, implementing, enforcing, and adjudicating important policies for that country.

- **GOVERNMENT**: The leadership in power at a particular moment, roughly akin to an American administration.

- **CONSTITUTION**: Rules that specify the relationship between the state and its citizens and the different parts of the government
  - Formal and Informal Elements
  - Federal v. Unitary
A. A World of States

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Legislative:
- Number of Chambers: Unicameral or Bicameral
- Upper House and Lower House

Executive:
- Presidential and Parliamentary
- Head of State v. Head of Government

Judiciary:
- Common Law v. Roman Law
- Judicial Review (or Not)
B. Governing the Economy

- **Political Economy** refers to how government affect economic performance and how economic performance in turn affects a country’s political processes
  - The interaction of STATES and MARKETS

- **Global Financial Crisis and Response**
  - Neoliberalism v. Keynesianism

- **Varieties of Capitalism**
  - Which Form of Capitalism Works Best?
  - How to Measure Success?
  - What Should Be the Goal? (Growth v. Equity)
C. The Democratic Idea

- Trends in Democracy
- Types of Political Systems
  - Authoritarian
  - Transitional Democracy
  - Consolidated Democracies
- Elements of Liberal Democracy
  - Free, Fair, and Regular Elections with Majority Rule & Universal Suffrage
  - Rule of Law/Constitutionalism
  - Protections of Civil Liberties (speech, religion, assembly, association, etc.)
  - Political & Legal Equality/Protection of Minority Rights
C. The Democratic Idea

- **Political Parties:** organizations that seek to place their designated representatives in governmental positions.
  - ‘Catch-all’ v. Particularistic
  - One Party (Japan, Sweden); Two Party (US, UK); Multiparty (Germany, Italy, France)

- **Responsible Party Model:**
  - Parties formulate clear and coherent programs
  - Voters compare and select among competing programs
  - The winning party translates those programs into policies/laws
  - Repeat at next election cycle

- *This is the ideal against which party system performance is compared.*
C. The Democratic Idea

- **Elections:**
  - Single Member District (plurality or majority) versus Proportional Representation

- **(Maurice) Duverger’s Law:**
  - Proportional Representation \(\Rightarrow\) Multiparty System
  - Single Member Districts \(\Rightarrow\) Two Party System

- **Electoral Behavior**

- **Public Opinion and Legitimacy**
  - **Legitimacy:** A belief by powerful groups and/or the broad citizenry that a state exercises rightful authority.
D. The Politics of Collective Identity

POLITICAL CULTURE: the attitudes, beliefs, and symbols that influence political behavior.

- Developed via (a) socialization; (b) national experience (history)
- Varies across countries and within countries
- Political culture v. public opinion
- CAN change over time or with seismic events (i.e., Pearl Harbor, Vietnam, 9-11)
D. The Politics of Collective Identity

- **Nation:** A group of people who are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, historically etc. similar and develop a common bond.

- **Nationalism:** a political movement that emphasizes national distinctiveness and advocates the creation of a separate national state

- **Ethnicity:** A group of individuals having a distinct culture in common.

- **Race:** identification based on common biological characteristics
Nations v. States

The “Kurdish Problem”
D. The Politics of Collective Identity

- **(Socio-Economic) Class**: one’s relative position within the social and economic structure
  - Objective v. Subjective

- **POINT**: Collective identities...
  - Are inherently subjective
  - Both bring people together and drive them apart (double-edged sword)
Polarizing v. Cross-Cutting Cleavages

- **Polarizing**

- **Cross-Cutting**