Course name: Comparative Politics Theory, Methodology, and Practice
Course number: POLI 3005 BAAR
Programs offering course: Open Campus (International Relations and Political Science Track)
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Spring 2019

Course Description
This course examines the political systems of various Latin American nation-states. Focus is placed on the main political cleavages such as class, ideology, ethnicity, and religion, and how these divisions have influenced the political playing fields. Additional topics include nationalism, citizenship, party structures, corporatism, the welfare state, and electoral politics. A special focus will be recent symptoms that have been interpreted as indications of a crisis of Latin American democracy.
As we compare the features of the different political systems in detail and relate them to their historical and cultural context, we will focus on three major challenges common to all of these democracies: the decreasing level of participation, especially regarding voter turnout; the decline of large political parties, which raises the question of who, in future, is going to mediate between the citizens’ interests and those of the state; and the perception that the major decisions in democratic countries are increasingly made outside the purview of democratic institutions.

Learning Objectives
● Contrast the significant differences between the political systems of the countries analyzed and examine how these differences translate into a specific landscape of political parties and characteristic patterns of governance.
● Examine common problems and challenges of Latin American democracies and compare these at the level of democratic theory.
● Examine the most important positions in the recurrent debate about the “crisis of democracy.”
● Assess proposals for improvement and think creatively about how to help democracies become more just and more democratic and regain their lost public appeal.
● Practice critical thinking skills, e.g. by developing and applying category schemes to identify the strengths and weaknesses of constitutional democracies in Latin America and analyze their similarities and differences.
● Use meetings with legislators, activists, and political scientists to hone one’s questioning techniques and other interview skills.

Course Prerequisites
Students should have completed a level 2000 course in political science, international relations, or history prior to taking this course.
Methods of Instruction
The course will consist of lectures by the professor, followed by Q&As and class discussions based on the class material and assigned readings. Classroom activities will include individual, partner and group work and will be complemented by homework exercises. The learning process will be enhanced by discussion meetings with representatives of different players in the public sphere, among them NGOs, political scientists, and politicians.

Assessment and Final Grade
Evaluation will be based on conceptual clarity, self-critical skills, and the ability to relate disparate concepts, but equally to creative thinking and original critique. The final grade will be made up of the following components:

1. Oral Presentation 20%
2. Midterm Exam 20%
3. Final Exam 20%
4. Research Paper 20%
5. Class participation 20%

Course Requirements

Oral Presentation
Students will have to develop a 10-15 minute presentation on a chosen topic of contemporary democracies in Latin America. Specific guidelines and evaluation rubric will be given to students in order to enhance the exposition and better address the requirements of the class. Presentations are individual. However, if the class size makes this necessary, the presentations will be assigned to groups of no more than 2 members.

Midterm Exam
The purpose of the exam is to allow students to demonstrate, and verify for themselves, that they have understood the main arguments / positions discussed in class and demonstrate their ability for creative thinking by evaluating and further developing them. Midterm exam will consist of a take-home essay questions (at least 2 of 800-1000 words each) that refer to the assigned readings as well as to class debates and excursion topics.

Final Exam
The purpose of the exam is to allow students to demonstrate, and verify for themselves, that they have understood the main arguments / positions discussed in class and demonstrate their ability for creative thinking by evaluating and further developing them. Final exam will also consist of take-home essay (1500-2000 words) that students will elaborate on an individually chosen topic.

Research Project
Each student is required to write a research paper. Topics may be historical, theoretical, or empirical. Materials prepared in connection with the interviews and debate meetings (see under Class Participation) may be expanded into a research paper. The instructor offers suggestions, advice, and
monitoring if desired. The research paper should comprise about 2000-2500 words and Chicago citation style.

**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 Policy**
Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused 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, unexcused 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 Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise because of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. 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.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; <strong>written warning</strong></td>
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More than 20% content classes, or 5 language classes, Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion

Weekly Schedule
Note: This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

Week 1
1.1 Macro dimensions of comparative politics.
The world of political dispute: why and what do we compare? The course begins with a revision of the dominant political ideologies and the historical and theoretical contexts of comparative politics around the world and in Latin America from the 19th century to our time, a crucial foundation for understanding the political systems to be investigated in detail. Also, the purpose of this class is to introduce the macro dimensions that will be approached in this course: regimes, actors, institutions and policies.

1.2 Methods on case studies.
This session will outline the major differences between qualitative and quantitative methods, and 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.


Week 2
2.1 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.


2.2 Contemporary democracies in Latin America.
During this session, students will discuss the reading through a proposed guideline. They will also present the case of a chosen democracy in Latin America to their peers according to the instructor’s specific guidelines.

Due: Oral Presentations.
Readings: Blake (2008), Ch.3: 43 – 70.
2.3 Interview to a local Political Analyst.
Students will work with local newspapers on the accounts on current local political
news. They will make researches on the most recent political, social and economic
aspects of Argentina and will prepare an interview to a political analyst to best
understand current local topics.

Week 3
3.1 Polyarchy to Contemporary Liberal Democracy
In this class students will be introduced to the concept of regime in political systems. They
will discuss the major contributions to democratic theory from polyarchy to
contemporary liberal democracy and its challenges. Readings will be evaluated through
question guidelines. The mid-term exam will be handed in for completion.

Readings: Linz, Juan J.; Stepan, Alfred C. (1996)

3.2 Authoritarianism and Transition processes.
This class outlines the different degrees of non-democratic regimes and introduces the
grand theories of transition processes. A special interest will be given to the concept of
the third wave of democratization.


3.3 Measuring and sub-categorizing democracy
This class addresses the importance of democratic studies in CP and introduces and
discusses the major approaches and tools to measuring or categorizing democracies.

Readings: Collier, David; Levitsky, Steven (1997), p. 430-451

Week 4
4.1 Institutions and 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. The final exam will be handed in for completion.

Due: Mid-term Exam.

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.
In the second half of this class, students will visit the congress as part of a co-curricular activity.

Readings: Olson, David (1994), Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

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
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.

Due: Final Exam.
Readings: Mair, Peter (1997), Chapters 2 and 3.

5.2 Citizenship and political engagement
This class covers the non-state actors sphere by acknowledging the role of political activism and political engagement by the organized civil society. Students will learn about the different historical phases of social movements and evaluate the alternative methods of political activism.

Due: Theme and outline for Research Paper.

5.3 Interview to a local NGO activist.
Students will make a research on different local NGOs and will share their learnings and thoughts in discussion. They will also investigate on the invited local activist (TBD) and make an interview that best represents their understanding of the topics seen throughout the course.

Week 6
6.1 From crisis to reforming and strengthening democracy.
This class will try to answer the question about the loss of confidence in democratic institutions and the inefficiency of their decision-making processes in Latin American political systems. Also, it will seek to answer the question about how relevant and urgent are the current warnings about the crisis of democracy in Latin America and solutions for its strengthening.
This class aims to compare Latin American cases of democratic crisis between 1991 and 2018 through some main factors or causal explanations and the role of international institutions such as the OAS and others on mediating these events.


6.3 Final thoughts and feedback
Students will watch a short film and discuss on how the topics seen throughout the course help them reflect and compare different aspects of the contemporary political systems. They will write and share their impressions. A debrief on the individual research papers will be held.

Due: Research Paper.

Course Materials

Readings


https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pippa_Norris/publication/245862430_Democratic_Phoenix_Reinventing_Political_Activism/links/569153d408ae91f69a50816.pdf
http://fbemoodle.emu.edu.tr/pluginfile.php/40457/mod_resource/content/1/Shin.pdf

Online Resources

https://www.v-dem.net/en/
https://www.idea.int/
https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/
https://www.bti-project.org/en/home/
http://www.hacer.org/latin-american-newspapers/