

Vesalius College

Course description

Course title: Comparative States and Political Institutions

Course code: POL 232E

Teacher responsible: A. E. Woodward

Course description:

This course introduces the study of the state and its major institutional features from a comparative perspective. It considers the nature of “the state” and the logic of comparative methodology and discusses different frameworks for carrying out comparative political study. It develops models for comparison and explores theories about the origins of political structures and development of political behavior, contrasting major European industrial democracies (UK, France, Germany) with other systems (transitional regimes in Russia, socialism in China, etc.). The course aims to explore the relations of state and society under influence of global pressures through confrontation with empirical study of specific state structures and practices.

Course objectives:

It aims to help students

- To understand the origins and nature of the political structures in modern states and to recognize typical patterns of political behavior and their consequences
- Achieve familiarity with the prominent characteristics of a few major industrial democracies states and mixed socialist and post-socialist state systems. The evolution of the constitutional and political structure and processes of policy formation are surveyed.
- Learn how to compare and contrast how polities deal with issues such as relations between state and the individual, maintaining public order, representation of interests, regulation of conflicts and continuity.
- Locate, evaluate, and interpret sources of data about different political institutions and carry out rudimentary empirical analysis
- Develop an expertise about one of the states treated in the course and increase factual knowledge about the world's diverse political structures and practices.

Grade weighting scheme:

Class participation (including attendance, writing in-class, discussion)	10%
News presentation	5%
Panel presentation	5%
Short bibliography paper	10%
Article analysis paper	5%
Quizzes	10%
Mid term exam	15%
Final Exam	5%
Term paper	25%

Used course material (handbooks, readers, readings, newspapers, magazines) and references:

Hauss, Charles *Comparative Politics* 5th edition ISBN: 0 534 59053 5 Wadsworth Publishers 2005.

Subscription to *The Financial Times*

Articles from Infotrac accessible from textbook and selections on comparative political methodology provided by instructor