COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Professor: JOSE RAMON MONTERO GIBERT

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Education
Law degree, University of Granada, 1970; Ph.D. in Law, University of Santiago de Compostela, 1974

Professional Experience
Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science and International Relations. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

Visiting Fellow at Harvard University, University of California at Berkeley, Ohio State University, Institute d’Études Politiques (Bordeaux), ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, and European University Institute (Florence).

Has taught at the Universities of Granada, Santiago, Zaragoza, Cádiz, and Complutense de Madrid, as well as at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Juan March Institute, Madrid.

Has been Dean of the School of Law, Universidad de Cádiz; Deputy Director, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS); Director of the Economics and Social Science Programme, Ministry of Education; Vicepresident of the Spanish Association of Political Science; a member of the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences, European Science Foundation.

Currently is a member of the of the Academia Europeae, the Comparative National Elections Project, and the COST-funded European project on The True European Voter.

Publications
Has published extensively on electoral behaviour, political parties, political culture, and political participation. Recent books include


Political Disaffection in Contemporary Democracies (London: Routledge, 2006, edited with Mariano Torcal);

Ciudadanos, asociaciones y participación en España (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2006, edited with Joan Font and M. Torcal);

Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies (London: Routledge, 2007, edited with Jan van Deth and Anders Westholm);

Democracy, Intermediation, and Voting on Four Continents (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, edited with R. Gunther and Hans-Jürgen Pühlle);

Roads to Democracy (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, 2007, edited with Joan
Marcet);  

_The Politics of Spain_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, with R. Gunther);  

_Elecciones generales 2004_ (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2007, edited with Ignacio Lago and M. Torcal);  

_Elecciones generales 2008_ (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2011, edited with I. Lago);  

and he has also edited (with Thomas Jeffrey Miley) _Juan J. Linz’s Obras Escogidas_ seven volumes (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2008-2013)
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will introduce students to the comparative study of democratic political processes. It is intended primarily for graduate students entering the comparative field in Political Science. More specifically, the course will examine the role that institutional arrangements play in shaping strategic political behavior by political elites and citizens. In substantive terms, the course focuses on a selection of major themes such as regime types ranging from democratic to dictatorships, presidential versus parliamentary governments, federal versus unitary political systems, political culture and political participation by citizens, political parties and party systems, elections and models of voting, and types of electoral systems and their respective consequences. The course aims at providing knowledge about how to handle major issues in comparative politics, as well as tools for analysing all type of countries. Both knowledge and tools may become relevant skills for a wide range of potential professional careers.

PROGRAM

SESSION 1

Introduction: getting organized.
This session will of course provide a roadmap of the course.

SESSION 2

What is comparative politics?
In this introductory session, the basic questions revolve around the thrust of the course. What is compared, and why to compare? And what’s the politics that need to be compared? What are the strengths and limitations of the most relevant forms of comparative explanations?


T.N.: Daniele Caramani, "Introduction to Comparative Politics"

SESSION 3

Democracies.
In a time when democratic legitimacy seems to go universally unchallenged, what really is a democracy and what is not? Is there a universal meaning to the concept of democracy or are there regional versions of it?, what are the pros and cons of those applied for instance by Freedom House, The Economist Intelligence Unit, or Polity IV? How can we order the huge diversity of democracies?

• Doc.: Peter Mair, “Democracies”, Comparative Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ch. 5

B.C.: Democracies (Peter Mair) - Comparative Politics (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 108-132 (sc/hum)
SESSION 4

Dictatorships, autocracies, and authoritarian regimes.
In spite of the recent expansion of democracy, dictatorships still abound. Are all they alike? Between democracy and dictatorship, is there a continuum or do they constitute an incompatible dichotomy? Why electoral autocracies seem to be growing worldwide?

• Doc.: Paul Brooker, “Authoritarian Regimes”

Other: Paul Brooker, Authoritarian Regimes

SESSION 5

Democratization and democratic transitions.
Democracies have recently appeared in waves, and processes of transition towards democracies have been rather common phenomena in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Do transition processes entail certain prerequisites? And once a new democratic system is put in place, what factors do contribute to its consolidation in a reasonable period of time?


SESSION 6

Presidential and parliamentary systems.
Democratic polities share a number of institutional arrangements. Some of their institutions play a relevant role along both functional and territorial lines. The functional dimension has given birth to presidential and parliamentary democracies. What are their distinctive characteristics? Why presidential regimes are typically associated with democratic breakdowns and parliamentary systems with government instability? How do they perform in terms of the quality of democracies?


R.A.: Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy (Linz) - The Failure of Presidential Democracy (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 3-87 - But read only pp. 3-22, 30-36, 42-46, and 62-70 (sc/hum)
SESSION 7

**Federal and unitary systems.**
Democratic systems do also differ along the territorial dimension, in that power is divided among different levels or layers with varying degrees of decentralization and decision-making. What variables are relevant for classifying the federal polities? Does federalism contribute to facilitate political integration between the centre and the several territorial units? Does federalism strengthen good governance, or are rather unitary systems?


SESSION 8

**Political culture and political participation.**
This session will be focused on citizens as actors through two most relevant dimensions. Political culture refers to the pattern of attitudes and values towards the political system. Political participation consists of ways in which citizens aim to influence some political outcomes. Are there distinct national political cultures? What are the principal modes of participation? What consequences does participation have on political and social inequality?


B.C.: Political participation: mapping the terrain (Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis - sc/hum)

SESSION 9

**Parties and party systems.**
Together with elections, political parties are at the core of modern democracies: without parties, democracy is simply unthinkable. They play basic roles in coordinating politicians and citizens, structuring political competition, conducting electoral campaigns, recruiting personnel for public offices, and representing party members and voters alike. At the same time, parties are everywhere suffering processes of delegitimation. What consequences do they have for the functioning of democratic politics?


B.C.: Political parties (Richard Katz) - Comparative Politics (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 293-317. (sc/hum)
SESSION   10

Elections and electoral behavior.  
Voting is the quintessential mechanism of any democratic system. By voting, citizens are able to communicate their preferences towards candidates, parties, governments, and policies, as well as to hold governments and politicians accountable. What variables are deemed to be the most relevant for citizens in making their voting choices? How can voters overcome problems of demobilization, emotional identification, or deficient information? Regarding accountability, what institutional factors do enhance or hamper it in different political systems?


SESSION   11

Electoral systems: choices and consequences.  
Democracies show amazing variations in their electoral systems. What are the major distinctions between the most relevant electoral-system families? Are mixed-member systems the best of two worlds (i.e., those of plurality and proportional representation systems)? What normative values about the functioning of democracy should electoral systems meet?


SESSION   12

Final exam

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students are expected to write three short research papers (about 3 double-spaced pages), one for every three sessions. The first paper will correspond to sessions 3, 4, and 5; the second, to sessions 6, 7, and 8; and the third, to sessions 9, 10, and 11. Papers should develop a research question, or compare some political institutions either across countries or within countries. Those papers are due at class time. They would count for 40% of the grade.

2. Students should also make short presentations in sessions 3 through 11; in these, a small workgroup will make a collective 15-minute power-point presentation applying the main lessons of the session to a short number of country cases, to be followed by another 15-minute period for questions and answers. Beginning in session 2, students should meet with me one week before their presentations for discussing their main topics. Those presentations would count for 20% of the grade.

3. Students are expected to keep up with the required readings and to participate in class. Class participation would count for 10% of the grade.

4. And finally there will be an in-class final exam, which would count for 30% of the grade.